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VOL. 1448.

A MANUAL OF ENGLISH LITERATURE & LANGUAGE

BY

GEORGE L. CRAIK, LL.D.

IN TWO VOLUMES. — VOL. 1.

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The reader will do well to keep in mind, or under his eye, the four following Schemes, or Synoptical Views, according to which the history of the English Language in its entire extent may be methodized:—

I.

1. Original, Pure, Simple, or First English (commonly called Saxon, or Anglo-Saxon); Synthetic, or Inflectional, in its Grammar, and Homogeneous in its Vocabulary;

2. Broken, or Second English (commonly called Semi-Saxon),—from soon after the middle of the eleventh century to about the middle of the thirteenth—when its ancient Grammatical System had been destroyed, and it had been converted from an Inflectional into a Non-Inflectional and Analytic language, by the *first* action upon it of the Norman Conquest;

3. Mixed, or Compound, or Composite, or Third English,—since the middle of the thirteenth century—about which date its Vocabulary also began to be changed by the combination of its original Gothic with a French (Romance or Neo-Latin) element, under the *second* action upon it of the Norman Conquest.

II.

1. The Original form, in which the three vowel-endings *a*, *e*, and *u* are employed in the declension of nouns and the conjugation of verbs;

2. The Second form, in which the single termination *e* represents indiscriminately the three ancient vowel-endings, but still constitutes a distinct syllable;

3. The Third form, in which this termination *e* of nouns and verbs, though still written, is no longer syllabically pronounced.

III.

1. *Saxon*, or *Anglo-Saxon;* throughout the period before the Norman Conquest;

2. *Semi-Saxon;* from about the middle of the eleventh to the middle of the thirteenth century; the period of the Infancy and Childhood of our existing national speech;

3. *Old*, or rather *Early*, *English;* from the middle of the thirteenth to the middle of the fourteenth century; the period of the Boyhood of our existing speech;

4. *Middle English;* from the middle of the fourteenth to the middle of the sixteenth century; the Youth, or Adolescence of our existing speech;

5. *Modern English;* since the middle of the sixteenth century; the Manhood of our existing speech.

IV.

A.D.

450. Commencement of the conquest and occupation of South Britain by the Angles and Saxons, bringing with them their ancestral Gothic speech;

1066. Conquest of England by the Normans; Establishment of French as the courtly and literary language of the country; Commencement of the reduction of the ancient vernacular tongue to the condition of a patois, and of its conversion from a synthetic to an analytic tongue;

1154. End of the reign of the four Norman kings and accession of the Plantagenet dynasty; Beginning of the connexion with Southern France through the marriage of Henry II. with Eleanor of Poitou; Termination of the National Chronicle, the latest considerable composition in the regular form of the ancient language; Full commencement of the intermixture of the two races;

1272. New age of the Edwards; Commencement of the connexion of the English royal family with that of France by the second marriage of Edward I. with a daughter of Philip III.; Employment, at first occasionally, afterwards habitually, of French instead of Latin as the language of the Statutes; Commencement of its active intermixture with the vernacular tongue;

1362. Trials at law in the King's Courts directed by the statute of 36 Edward III. to be conducted no longer in French but in English; Victory of the native tongue in its new composite form over its foreign rival, and recovery of its old position as the literary language of the country, under the impulse of the war with France, and of the genius of Minot, Langland, and Chaucer;

1455. Outbreak of the desolating War of the Roses, and complete extinction for a time of the light of literature in England;

1558. Accession of Elizabeth; Commencement of a new literary era, with the native language in sole dominion;

1660. Restoration of the Stuarts; Noonday of the Gallican age of English literature;

1760. Accession of George III.; Complete association in the national literature of Scottish and Irish writers with those of England.

CONTENTS

OF VOLUME I.

	Page
INTRODUCTORY	
The Languages of Modern Europe	13
Early Latin Literature in Britain	15
The Celtic Languages and Literatures	21
Decay of the Earliest English Scholarship	27
The English Language	33
Original English (commonly called *Saxon*, or *Anglo-Saxon*)	37
The Norman Conquest	43
Arabic and other New Learning	49
Schools and Universities	56
Rise of the Scholastic Philosophy	62
Classical Learning; Mathematics; Medicine; Law; Books	65
The Latin Language	70
Latin Chroniclers	72
The French Language in England	74
The Langue D'Oc and the Langue D'Oyl	80
Vernacular Language and Literature:—A.D. 1166—1216	84
The Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries:—Ascendancy of the Scholastic Philosophy	97
Mathematical and other Studies	100
Universities and Colleges	105
Cultivation and Employment of the Learned Tongues in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries	108
Last Age of the French Language in England	113
Re-emergence of the English as a Literary Tongue	117
Second English (commonly called *Semi-Saxon*)	121
The Brut of Layamon	125
The Ormulum	132
The Ancren Riwle	137
Early English Metrical Romances	140
Metrical Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester	143
Robert Mannyng, or De Brunne	145
Lawrence Minot	146
Alliterative Verse;—Piers Ploughman	150
Piers Ploughman's Creed,	158
THIRD ENGLISH (*Mixed* or *Compound English*)	161
Geoffrey Chaucer	161
John Gower	199
John Barbour	202

Page

Compound English Prose:—Sir John Mandevil; Trevisa; Wiclif; Chaucer 210
Printing in England:—Caxton 214
English Chroniclers 216
Bishop Pecock; Fortescue; Malory 217
English Poets:—Occleve; Lydgate 222
Scottish Poets:—Wynton; James I.; Henryson; Holland; Blind Harry 224
Prose Writers:—More; Elyot; Tyndal; Cranmer; Latimer . . . 232
Scottish Prose Writers 241
English Poets:—Hawes; Barklay 242
Skelton 244
Roy; John Heywood 246
Scottish Poets:—Gawin Douglas; Dunbar; Lyndsay 247
Surrey; Wyatt, ... 249
The Elizabethan Literature 251
The Mirror for Magistrates 251
Origin of the Regular Drama 254
Interludes of John Heywood 256
Udall's Ralph Roister Doister 257
Gammer Gurton's Needle 259
Misogonus 261
Chronicle Histories:—Bale's Kynge Johan, etc. 262
Tragedy of Gorboduc;—Blank Verse 263
Other Early Dramas 267
Second Stage of the Regular Drama:—Peele; Greene 269
Marlow 270
Lyly; Kyd; Lodge 272
Earlier Elizabethan Prose:—Lyly; Sidney; Spenser; Nash; etc. . 277
Edmund Spenser 283
Other Elizabethan Poetry 299
William Warner 300
Samuel Daniel 306
Michael Drayton 310
Joseph Hall 313
Joshua Sylvester 314
Chapman's Homer 316
Harington; Fairfax; Fanshawe 317
William Drummond 318
Sir John Davies 319
John Donne 320
Shakespeare's Minor Poems 323
Shakespeare's Dramatic Works 324
Dramatists contemporary with Shakespeare 334
Beaumont and Fletcher 335
Jonson 340
Massinger; Ford 342
Later Elizabethan Prose Writers 343
Translation of the Bible 344
Theological Writers:—Bishop Andrews; Donne; Hall; Hooker . 345
Francis Bacon 347
Robert Burton 350
Historical Writers 350

SPECIMENS

TO VOLUME I.

	Page
Song of Canute	122
Archbishop Aldred's Curse	123
St. Godric's Hymn	123
,, Sister's Rhyme	123
,, Hymn to St. Nicholas	124
Rhyme of Flemings and Normans (1173)	124
Hugh Bigott's Boast	124
The Here Prophecy	124
Layamon's Brut:—Part of Introduction	129
The Ormulum:—Part of Dedication	134
,, ,, Injunction as to Spelling	135
The Ancren Riwle:—Eating and Fasting	139
Robert of Gloucester's Chronicle:—French Language in England	144
Minot; First Invasion of France by Edward III.	148
Vision of Piers Ploughman;—Commencement	154
Piers Ploughman's Creed:—Description of Piers	159
Chaucer:—House of Fame; Fagle's Address to Chaucer	183
,, ,, ,, Notice of Fire-arms	185
,, ,, ,, Old Mechanical Artillery	185
,, Canterbury Tales; The Prioress (from the Prologue)	187
,, ,, ,, The Mendicant Friar (from the Prologue)	188
,, ,, ,, Emily (from the Knight's Tale)	190
,, ,, ,, Temple of Mars (from the Knight's Tale)	191
,, ,, ,, Passages relating to the Host	193
,, ,, ,, Part of the Clerk's Tale of Griselda	197
Barbour:—The Bruce; Eulogy on Freedom	208
Mandevil:—Travels; part of Prologue	210
Chaucer (Prose):—Canterbury Tales; Pride in Dress, etc.	212
Bishop Pecock:—Repressor; Midsummer Eve	218
Fortescue:—Difference, etc.: French King and People	219
Malory:—Morte Arthur; Death of Lancelot	221
Wyntoun:—Chronicle	225
Blind Harry:—Wallace; his Latin Original	230
,, ,, ,, The same subject	230
,, ,, ,, Commencement of the Poem	231
,, ,, ,, Part of Battle of Shortwoodshaw	231
,, ,, ,, L'Envoy	232

Page
Sir Thomas More:—Letter to his Wife 234
Udall:—Ralph Roister Doister 259
Spenser:—Fairy Queen; Belphœbe 297
Warner:—Albion's England; Old Man and his Ass 304
" " " Fall of Richard the Third . . . 304
" " " Fair Rosamund and Queen Eleanor . 305
Daniel:—Musophilus; Defence of Poetry 308
Drayton:—Polyolbion; Stag-hunt 310
" Nymphidia; Queen of the Fairies 312
Sylvester:—Divine Weeks; Praise of Night 315
Donne:—Song 322

MANUAL OF THE HISTORY

OF

ENGLISH LITERATURE.

The Languages of Modern Europe.

The existing European languages may be nearly all comprehended under five divisions. First, there are the Celtic tongues of Ireland and Wales, and their subordinate varieties. Secondly, there are the tongues founded upon the Latin spoken by the old Romans, and thence called the Romance or the Neo-Latin, that is, the New Latin, tongues; of these, the principal are the Italian, the Spanish, and the French. The Romaic, or Modern Greek, may be included under the same head. Thirdly, there are what have been variously designated the Germanic, Teutonic, or Gothic tongues, being those which were originally spoken by the various barbarian races by whom the Roman empire of the West was overthrown and overwhelmed (or at the least subjugated, revolutionized, and broken up) in the fifth and sixth centuries. Fourthly, there are the Slavonic tongues, of which the Russian and the Polish are the most distinguished. Fifthly, there are the Tschudic tongues, as they have been denominated, or those spoken by the Finnic and Laponnic races. Almost the only language which this enumeration leaves out is that still preserved by the French and Spanish Biscayans, and known as the Basque, or among those who speak it as the Euskarian, which seems to stand alone among the tongues not only of Europe but of the

world. It is supposed to be a remnant of the ancient Iberian or original language of Spain.

The order in which four at least of the five sets or classes of languages have been named may be regarded as that of their probable introduction into Europe from Asia or the East, or at any rate of their establishment in the localities of which they are now severally in possession. First, apparently, came the Celtic, now driven on to the farthest west; after which followed in succession the Latin, the Gothic, and the Slavonic, pressing upon and urging forward one another like so many waves.

Their present geographical position may also be set forth in few words. Those of the Celtic type are found, as just mentioned, in the West, the Latin generally in the South, the Slavonic in the East, the Tschudic in the North, and the Gothic over the whole of the central region. The chief exception is, that one Tschudic language, the Madgyar, is spoken in Hungary, at the south-eastern extremity of Europe.

The English is essentially or fundamentally a Gothic tongue. That is to say, it is to be classed among those which were spoken by the main division of the barbaric invaders and conquerors of the Roman empire, and which are now spread over the whole of the central portion of the European continent, or what we may call the body of Europe as distinguished from its head and limbs. These Gothic tongues have been subdivided into the High-Germanic, the Low-Germanic, and the Scandinavian; and each of these subordinate groups or clusters has a certain character of its own in addition to the common character by which they are all allied and discriminated from those belonging to quite other stocks. They may be said to present different shades of the same colour. And even in their geographical distribution they lie as it were in so many successive ridges;—the High-Germanic languages farthest south; next to them, the Low-Germanic, in the middle; and then, farthest north, the Scandinavian. The High-Germanic may be considered to

be principally represented by the modern classic German; the Low-Germanic by the language of the people of Holland, or what we call the Low Dutch, or simply the Dutch; the Scandinavian, by the Swedish, Danish, or Icelandic.

It may be remarked, too, that the gradation of character among the three sets of languages corresponds to their geographical position. That is to say, their resemblance is in proportion to their proximity. Thus, the High-Germanic and the Scandinavian groups are both nearer in character, as well as in position, to the Low-Germanic than they are to each other; and the Low-Germanic tongues, lying in the middle, form as it were a sort of link, or bridge, between the other two extreme groups. Climate, and the relative elevation of the three regions, may have something to do with this. The rough and full-mouthed pronunciation of the High-Germanic tongues, with their broad vowels and guttural combinations, may be the natural product of the bracing mountain air of the south; the clearer and neater articulation of the Low-Germanic ones, that of the milder influences of the plain; the thinner and sharper sounds of the Scandinavian group, that of the more chill and pinching hyperborean atmosphere in which they have grown up and been formed.

Early Latin Literature in Britain.

When the South of Britain became a part of the Roman empire, the inhabitants, at least of the towns, seem to have adopted generally the Latin language and applied themselves to the study of the Latin literature. The diffusion among them of this new taste was one of the first means employed by their politic conquerors, as soon as they had fairly established themselves in the island, to rivet their dominion. A more efficacious they could not have devised; and, happily, it was also the best fitted to turn their subjugation into a blessing to the conquered people. Agricola,

having spent the first year of his administration in establishing in the province the order and tranquillity which is the first necessity of the social condition, and the indispensable basis of all civilization, did not allow another winter to pass without beginning the work of thus training up the national mind to a Roman character. Tacitus informs us that he took measures for having the sons of the chiefs educated in the liberal arts, exciting them at the same time by professing to prefer the natural genius of the Britons to the studied acquirements of the Gauls; the effect of which was, that those who lately had disdained to use the Roman tongue now became ambitious of excelling in eloquence. In later times, schools were no doubt established and maintained in all the principal towns of Roman Britain, as they were throughout the empire in general. There are still extant many imperial edicts relating to these public seminaries, in which privileges are conferred upon the teachers, and regulations laid down as to the manner in which they were to be appointed, the salaries they were to receive, and the branches of learning they were to teach. But no account of the British schools in particular has been preserved. It would appear, however, that, for some time at least, the older schools of Gaul were resorted to by the Britons who pursued the study of the law: Juvenal, who lived in the end of the first and the beginning of the second century, speaks, in one of his Satires, of eloquent Gaul instructing the pleaders of Britain. But even already forensic acquirements must have become very general in the latter country and the surrounding regions, if we may place any reliance on the assertion which he makes in the next line, that in Thule itself people now talked of hiring rhetoricians to manage their causes. Thule, whatever may have been the particular island or country to which that name was given, was the most northern land known to the ancients.

It is somewhat remarkable that, while a good many names of natives of Gaul are recorded in connexion with the last age of Roman literature, scarcely a British name of that

period of any literary reputation has been preserved, if we except a few which figure in the history of the Christian Church. The poet Ausonius, who flourished in the fourth century, makes frequent mention of a contemporary British writer whom he calls Sylvius Bonus, and whose native name is supposed to have been Coil the Good; but of his works, or even of their titles or subjects, we know nothing. Ausonius, who seems to have entertained strong prejudices against the Britons, speaks of Sylvius with the same animosity as of the rest of his countrymen. Of ecclesiastical writers in Latin belonging to the sixth century, the heresiarch Pelagius and his disciple Celestius, St. Patrick, the apostle of Ireland, with his friend Bishop Secundinus, and the poet Sedulius, are generally regarded as having been natives of the British islands.

Gildas, our earliest historian of whom anything remains, also wrote in Latin. St. Gildas the Wise, as he is styled, was a son of Caw, Prince of Strathclyde, in the capital of which kingdom, the town of Alcluyd, now Dunbarton, he is supposed to have been born about the end of the fifth or beginning of the sixth century. Caw was also father of the famous bard Aneurin: one theory, indeed, is that Aneurin and Gildas were the same person. In his youth Gildas is said to have gone over to Ireland, and to have studied in the schools of the old national learning that still flourished there; and, like his brother Aneurin (if Aneurin was his brother), he also commenced his career as a bard, or composer of poetry in his native tongue. He was eventually, however, converted to Christianity, and became a zealous preacher of his new religion. The greater part of his life appears to have been spent in his native island; but at last he retired to Armorica, or Little Britain, on the Continent, and died there. He is said to lie buried in the Cathedral of Vannes. Gildas is the author of two declamatory effusions, the one commonly known as his History (De Excidio Britanniæ Liber Querulus), the other as his Epistle (De Excidio Britanniæ et Britonum Exulatione), which have been often

printed. The latest edition is that contained in the Monumenta Historica Britannica, 1848; and there is also an edition prepared by Mr. Joseph Stevenson for the English Historical Society, 8vo. London: 1834. A translation of the Epistle was published in 1638; and both works are included in Dr. Giles's Six Old English Chronicles, 1848. They consist principally of violent invectives directed against his own countrymen as well as their continental invaders and conquerors; and throw but little light upon the obscure period to which they relate.

Our next historical writer is Nennius, said to have been a monk of Bangor, and to have escaped from the massacre of his brethren in 613. He too, like Gildas, is held to have been of Welsh or Cumbrian origin: his native name is conjectured to have been Ninian. But there is much obscurity and confusion in the accounts we have of Nennius: it appears to be probable that there were at least two early historical writers of that name. The author of a late ingenious work supposes that the true narrative of the ancient Nennius only came down to the invasion of Julius Cæsar, and is now lost, although we probably have an abridgment of it in the British History (Eulogium Britanniæ, sive Historia Britonum), published by Gale in his Scriptores Quindecim, Oxon. 1691, which, however, is expressly stated in the preface by the author himself to have been drawn up in 858. A very valuable edition of "The Historia Britonum, commonly attributed to Nennius, from a MS. lately discovered in the Library of the Vatican Palace at Rome," was published in 8vo. at London, in 1819, by the Rev. W. Gunn, B.D., rector of Irstead, Norfolk; and his greatly improved text has been chiefly followed in the subsequent edition prepared by Mr. Stevenson for the Historical Society (8vo. London, 1838). The most complete text, however, is probably that given in the Monumenta Historica Britannica, from a collation of no fewer than twenty-six manuscripts. An English version, originally published by Mr. Gunn in his edition of the Vatican text, is reprinted by Dr. Giles in his Six Old

English Chronicles. But the most curious and important volume connected with Nennius is that published in 1847 by the Irish Archæological Society, containing an Irish version of his History executed in the fourteenth century, with a translation and Notes by Dr. Todd, together with a large mass of Additional Notes, and an Introduction, by the Hon. Algernon Herbert.

Of the Latin writers among the Angles and Saxons any of whose works remain, the most ancient is Aldhelm, abbot of Malmesbury, and afterwards the first bishop of Sherborn, who died in 709. Aldhelm was of the stock of the kings of Wessex, and was initiated in Greek and Latin learning at the school in Kent presided over by the Abbot Adrian, who, like his friend Archbishop Theodore, appears to have been a native of Asia Minor, so that Greek was his native tongue. We are assured by one of his biographers that Aldhelm could write and speak Greek like a native of Greece. He also early associated himself with the monastic brotherhood of Malmesbury, or Meildulfesbyrig, that is, burgh or town of Meildulf, Maildulf, or Meldun, an Irish exile, by whom the monastery had been founded about half a century before the birth of Aldhelm. Among the studies of Aldhelm's after-life are mentioned the Roman law, the rules of Latin prosody, arithmetic, astronomy, and astrology.

But the English name of the times before the Norman Conquest that is most distinguished in literature is that of Beda, or Bede, upon whom the epithet of "The Venerable" has been justly bestowed by the respect and gratitude of posterity. All that we have written by Bede is in the Latin language. He was born some time between the years 672 and 677, at Jarrow, a village near the mouth of the Tyne, in the county of Durham, and was educated in the neighbouring monastery of Wearmouth under its successive abbots Benedict and Ceolfrid. He resided here, as he tells us himself, from the age of seven to that of twelve, during which time he applied himself with all diligence, he says, to the meditation of the Scriptures, the observance of regular dis-

discipline, and the daily practice of singing in the church. "It was always sweet to me," he adds, "to learn, to teach, and to write." In his nineteenth year he took deacon's orders, and in his thirtieth he was ordained priest. From this date till his death, in 735, he remained in his monastery, giving up his whole time to study and writing. His principal task was the composition of his celebrated Ecclesiastical History of England, which he brought to a close in his fifty-ninth year. It is our chief original authority for the earlier portion even of the civil history of the English nation. But Bede also wrote many other works, among which he has himself enumerated, in the brief account he gives of his life at the end of his Ecclesiastical History, Commentaries on most of the books of the Old and New Testaments and the Apocrypha, two books of Homilies, a Martyrology, a chronological treatise entitled On the Six Ages, a book on orthography, a book on the metrical art, and various other theological and biographical treatises. He likewise composed a book of hymns and another of epigrams. Most of these writings have been preserved, and have been repeatedly printed. It appears, from an interesting account of Bede's last hours by his pupil St. Cuthbert, that he was engaged at the time of his death in translating St. John's Gospel into his native tongue. Among his last utterances to his affectionate disciples watching around his bed were some recitations in the English language: "For," says the account, "he was very learned in our songs; and, putting his thoughts into English verse, he spoke it with compunction."

Another celebrated English churchman of this age was St. Boniface, originally named Winfrith, who was born in Devonshire about the year 680. Boniface is acknowledged as the Apostle of Germany, in which country he founded various monasteries, and was greatly instrumental in the diffusion both of Christianity and of civilization. He eventually became archbishop of Mentz, and was killed in East Friesland by a band of heathens in 755. Many of his

letters to the popes, to the English bishops, to the kings of France, and to the kings of the various states of his native country, still remain, and are printed in the collections entitled Bibliothecæ Patrum.

The Celtic Languages and Literatures.

No other branch of what is called the Indo-European family of languages is of higher interest in certain points of view than the Celtic. The various known forms of the Celtic are now regarded as coming under two great divisions, the Gaelic and the Cymric: Ireland being the head seat of the Gaelic (which may therefore also be called Irish), Wales being the head seat of the Cymric (which accordingly is by the English commonly called Welsh). Subordinate varieties of the Irish are the Gaelic of Scotland (often called Erse, or Ersh, that is, Irish), and the Manks, or Isle of Man tongue (now fast dying out): other Cymric dialects are the Cornish (now extinct as a spoken language), and the Armorican, or that still spoken in some parts of Bretagne.

The probability is, that the various races inhabiting the British islands when they first became known to the civilized world were mostly, if not all, of Celtic speech. Even in the parts of the country that were occupied by the Caledonians, the Picts, and the Belgian colonists, the oldest topographical names, the surest evidence that we have in all cases, and in this case almost our only evidence, are all, so far as can be ascertained, Celtic, either of the Cymric or of the Gaelic form. And then there are the great standing facts of the existence to this day of a large Cymric population in South Britain, and of a still larger Gaelic-speaking population in North Britain and in Ireland. No other account of these Celtic populations, or at least of the Welsh, has been attempted to be given, than that, as their own traditions and records are unanimous in asserting, they are the remnants of the races by which the two islands were occupied when

they first attracted the attention of the Romans about half a century before the commencement of the Christian era.

And both the Welsh and the Irish possess a large mass of literature in their native tongues, much of which has been printed, in great part no doubt of comparatively modern production, but claiming some of it, in its substance if not exactly in the very form in which it now presents itself, an antiquity transcending any other native literature of which the country can boast.

Neither the Welsh nor the Irish language and literature, however, can with any propriety be included in a history of English literature and of the English language. The relationship of English to any Celtic tongue is more remote than its relationship not only to German or Icelandic or French or Italian or Latin, but even to Russian or Polish, or to Persian or Sanscrit. Irish and Welsh are opposed in their entire genius and structure to English. It has indeed been sometimes asserted that the Welsh is one of the fountains of the English. One school of last-century philologists maintained that full a third of our existing English was Welsh. No doubt, in the course of the fourteen centuries that the two languages have been spoken alongside of each other in the same country, a considerable number of vocables can hardly fail to have been borrowed by each from the other; the same thing would have happened if it had been a dialect of Chinese that had maintained itself all that time among the Welsh mountains. If, too, as is probable, a portion of the previous Celtic population chose or were suffered to remain even upon that part of the soil which came to be generally occupied after the departure of the Romans by the Angles, Saxons, and other Teutonic or Gothic tribes, the importers of the English language and founders of the English nation, something of Celtic may in that way have intermingled and grown up with the new national speech. But the English language cannot therefore be regarded as of Celtic parentage. The Celtic words, or words of Celtic extraction, that are found in it, be they some

hundreds in number, or be they one or two thousands, are still only something foreign. They are products of another seed that have shot up here and there with the proper crop from the imperfectly cleared soil; or they are fragments of another mass which have chanced to come in contact with the body of the language, pressed upon by its weight, or blown upon it by the wind, and so have adhered to it or become imbedded in it. It would perhaps be going farther than known facts warrant us if we were to say that a Gothic tongue and a Celtic tongue are incapable of a true amalgamation. But undoubtedly it would require no common pressure to overcome so strong an opposition of nature and genius. The Gothic tongues, and the Latin or Romance tongues also, indeed, belong to distinct branches of what is called the Indo-European family; but the Celtic branch, though admitted to be of the same tree, has much more of a character of its own than any of the others. Probably any other two languages of the entire multitude held to be of this general stock would unite more readily than two of which only one was Celtic. It would be nearly the same case with that of the intermixture of an Indo-European with a Semitic language. It has been suggested that the Celtic branch must in all probability have diverged from the common stem at a much earlier date than any of the others. At any rate, in point of fact the English can at most be said to have been powdered or sprinkled with a little Celtic. Whatever may be the number of words which it has adopted, whether from the ancient Britons or from their descendants the Welsh, they are only single scattered words. No considerable department of the English dictionary is Welsh. No stream of words has flowed into the language from that source. The two languages have in no sense met and become one. They have not mingled as two rivers do when they join and fall into the same channel. There has been no chemical combination between the Gothic and the Celtic elements, but only more or less of a mechanical intermixture.

As the forms of the original English alphabetical characters are the same with those of the Irish, it is probable that it was from Ireland the English derived their first knowledge of letters. There was certainly, however, very little literature in the country before the arrival of Augustine, in the end of the sixth century. Augustine is supposed to have established schools at Canterbury; and, about a quarter of a century afterwards, Sigebert, king of the East Angles, who had spent part of his early life in France, is stated by Bede to have, upon his coming to the throne, founded an institution for the instruction of the youth of his dominions similar to those he had seen abroad. The schools planted by Augustine at Canterbury were afterwards greatly extended and improved by his successor, Archbishop Theodore, who obtained the see in 668. Theodore and his learned friend Adrian, Bede informs us, delivered instructions to crowds of pupils, not only in divinity, but also in astronomy, medicine, arithmetic, and the Greek and Latin languages. Bede states that some of the scholars of these accomplished foreigners were alive in his time, to whom the Greek and Latin were as familiar as their mother-tongue. Schools now began to multiply in other parts, and were generally to be found in all the monasteries and at the bishops' seats. Of these episcopal and monastic schools, that founded by Bishop Benedict in his abbey at Wearmouth, where Bede was educated, and that which Archbishop Egbert established at York, were among the most famous. But others of great reputation at a somewhat later date were superintended by learned teachers from Ireland. One was that of Maildulf at Malmesbury. At Glastonbury, also, it is related in one of the ancient lives of St. Dunstan, some Irish ecclesiastics had settled, the books belonging to whom Dunstan is recorded to have diligently studied. The northern parts of the kingdom, moreover, were indebted for the first light of learning as well as of religion to the missionaries from Iona, which was an Irish foundation.

For some ages Ireland was the chief seat of learning in

Christian Europe; and the most distinguished scholars who appeared in other countries were mostly either Irish by birth or had received their education in Irish schools. We are informed by Bede that in his day, the earlier part of the eighth century, it was customary for his English fellow-countrymen of all ranks, from the highest to the lowest, to retire for study and devotion to Ireland, where, he adds, they were all hospitably received, and supplied gratuitously with food, with books, and with instruction.* The glory of this age of Irish scholarship and genius is the celebrated Joannes Scotus, or Erigena, as he is as frequently designated, —either appellative equally proclaiming his true birthplace. He is supposed to have first made his appearance in France about the year 845, and to have remained in that country till his death, which appears to have taken place before 875. Erigena is the author of a translation from the Greek of certain mystical works ascribed to Dionysius the Areopagite, which he executed at the command of his patron, the French king, Charles the Bald, and also of several original treatises on metaphysics and theology. His productions may be taken as furnishing clear and conclusive evidence that the Greek language was taught at this time in the Irish schools. Mr. Turner has given a short account of his principal work, his Dialogue De Divisione Naturæ (On the Division of Nature), which he characterises as "distinguished for its Aristotelian acuteness and extensive information." In one place "he takes occasion," it is observed, "to give concise and able definitions of the seven liberal arts, and to express his opinion on the composition of things. In another part he inserts a very elaborate discussion on arithmetic, which he says he had learnt from his infancy. He also details a curious conversation on the elements of things, on the motions of the heavenly bodies, and other topics of astronomy and physiology. Among these he even gives the means of calculating the diameters of the lunar and solar circles. Besides the fathers Austin, the two Gre-

* Hist. Eccles. III, 28.

gories, Chrysostom, Basil, Epiphanius, Origen, Jerome, and Ambrosius, of whose works, with the Platonising Dionysius and Maximus, he gives large extracts, he also quotes Virgil, Cicero, Aristotle, Pliny, Plato, and Boethius; he details the opinions of Eratosthenes and of Pythagoras on some astronomical topics; he also cites Martianus Capella. His knowledge of Greek appears almost in every page."* The subtle speculations of Erigena have strongly attracted the notice of the most eminent among the modern inquirers into the history of opinion and of civilization: and the German Tenneman agrees with the French Cousin and Guizot in attributing to them a very extraordinary influence on the philosophy of his own and of succeeding times. To his writings and translations it is thought may be traced the introduction into the theology and metaphysics of Europe of the later Platonism of the Alexandrian school. It is remarkable, as Mr. Moore has observed, that the learned Mosheim had previously shown the study of the scholastic or Aristotelian philosophy to have been also of Irish origin. "That the Hibernians," says that writer, "who were called Scots in this [the eighth] century, were lovers of learning, and distinguished themselves in these times of ignorance by the culture of the sciences beyond all the other European nations, travelling through the most distant lands, both with a view to improve and to communicate their knowledge, is a fact with which I have been long acquainted; as we see them in the most authentic records of antiquity discharging, with the highest reputation and applause, the function of doctor in France, Germany, and Italy, both during this and the following century. But that these Hibernians were the first teachers of the scholastic theology in Europe, and so early as the eighth century illustrated the doctrines of religion by the principles of philosophy, I learned but lately."** And then he adduces the proofs that establish his position.

* Turner, Anglo-Sax. III. 393.

** Translated in Moore's Ireland, I. 302.

Decay of the Earliest English Scholarship.

It should seem not to be altogether correct to attribute the decline and extinction of the earliest literary civilization of the Angles and Saxons wholly to the Danish invasions. The Northmen did not make their appearance till towards the close of the eighth century, nor did their ravages occasion any considerable public alarm till long after the commencement of the ninth; but for a whole century preceding this date, learning in England appears to have been falling into decay. Bede, who died in 735, exactly ninety-seven years before that landing of the Danes in the Isle of Sheppey, in the reign of Egbert, which was followed by incessant attacks of a similar kind, until the fierce marauders at last won for themselves a settlement in the country, is the last name eminent for scholarship that occurs in this portion of the English annals. The historian William of Malmesbury, indeed, affirms that the death of Bede was fatal to learning in England, and especially to history; "insomuch that it may be said," he adds, writing in the early part of the twelfth century, "that almost all knowledge of past events was buried in the same grave with him, and hath continued in that condition even to our times." "There was not so much as one Englishman," Malmesbury declares, "left behind Bede, who emulated the glory which he had acquired by his studies, imitated his example, or pursued the path to knowledge which he had pointed out. A few, indeed, of his successors were good men, and not unlearned, but they generally spent their lives in an inglorious silence; while the far greater number sunk into sloth and ignorance, until by degrees the love of learning was quite extinguished in this island for a long time."

The devastations of the Danes completed what had probably been begun by the dissensions and confusion that

attended the breaking up of the original political system established by the Angles and Saxons, and perhaps also by the natural decay of the national spirit among a race long habituated to a stirring and adventurous life, and now left in undisturbed ease and quiet before the spirit of a new and more intellectual activity had been sufficiently diffused among them. Nearly all the monasteries and the schools connected with them throughout the land were either actually laid in ashes by the northern invaders, or were deserted in the general terror and distraction occasioned by their attacks. When Alfred was a young man, about the middle of the ninth century, he could find no masters to instruct him in any of the higher branches of learning: there were at that time, according to his biographer Asser, few or none among the West Saxons who had any scholarship, or could so much as read with propriety and ease. The reading of the Latin language is probably what is here alluded to. Alfred has himself stated, in the preface to his translation of Gregory's Pastorale, that, though many of the English at his accession could read their native language well enough, the knowledge of the Latin tongue was so much decayed, that there were very few to the south of the Humber who understood the common prayers of the church, or were capable of translating a single sentence of Latin into English; and to the south of the Thames he could not recollect that there was one possessed of this very moderate amount of learning. Contrasting this lamentable state of things with the better days that had gone before, he exclaims, "I wish thee to know that it comes very often into my mind, what wise men there were in England, both laymen and ecclesiastics, and how happy those times were to England! The sacred profession was diligent both to teach and to learn. Men from abroad sought wisdom and learning in this country, though we must now go out of it to obtain knowledge if we should wish to have it."

It was not till he was nearly forty years of age that Alfred himself commenced his study of the Latin language. Before

this, however, and as soon as he had rescued his dominions from the hands of the Danes, and reduced these foreign disturbers to subjection, he had exerted himself with his characteristic activity in bringing about the restoration of letters as well as of peace and order. He had invited to his court all the most learned men he could discover anywhere in his native land, and had even brought over instructors for himself and his people from other countries. Werfrith, the bishop of Worcester; Ethelstan and Werwulf, two Mercian priests; and Plegmund, also a Mercian, who afterwards became archbishop of Canterbury, were some of the English of whose superior acquirements he thus took advantage. Asser he brought from the western extremity of Wales. Grimbald he obtained from France, having sent an embassy of bishops, presbyters, deacons, and religious laymen, bearing valuable presents to his ecclesiastical superior Fulco, the archbishop of Rheims, to ask permission for the great scholar to be allowed to come to reside in England. And so in other instances, like the bee, looking everywhere for honey, to quote the similitude of his biographer, this admirable prince sought abroad in all directions for the treasure which his own kingdom did not afford.

His labours in translating the various works that have been mentioned above from the Latin, after he had acquired that language, he seems himself to have been half inclined to regard as to be justified only by the low state into which all learning had fallen among his countrymen in his time, and as likely perhaps to be rather of disservice than otherwise to the cause of real scholarship. Reflecting on the erudition which had existed in the country at a former period, and which had made those volumes in the learned languages useful that now lay unopened, "I wondered greatly," he says in the Preface to his translation of the Pastorale, "that of those good wise men who were formerly in our nation, and who had all learned fully these books, none would translate any part into their own language; but I soon answered myself, and said, they never thought that

men could be so reckless, and that learning would be so fallen. They intentionally omitted it, and wished that there should be more wisdom in the land, by many languages being known." He then called to recollection, however, what benefit had been derived by all nations from the translation of the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures, first into Latin, and then into the various modern tongues; and, "therefore," he concludes, "I think it better, if you think so (he is addressing Wulfsig, the bishop of London), that we also translate some books, the most necessary for all men to know, that we all may know them; and we may do this, with God's help, very easily, if we have peace; so that all the youth that are now in England, who are freemen, and possess sufficient wealth, may for a time apply to no other task till they first well know how to read English. Let those learn Latin afterwards, who will know more, and advance to a higher condition." In this wise and benevolent spirit he acted. The old writers seem to state that, besides the translations that have come down to us, he executed many others that are now lost.

It is probable, though there is no sufficient authority for the statement, that Alfred re-established many of the old monastic and episcopal schools in the various parts of the kingdom. Asser expressly mentions that he founded a seminary for the sons of the nobility, to the support of which he devoted no less than an eighth part of his whole revenue. Hither even some noblemen repaired who had far outgrown their youth, but nevertheless had scarcely or not at all begun their acquaintance with books. In another place Asser speaks of this school, to which Alfred is stated to have sent his own son Ethelward, as being attended not only by the sons of almost all the nobility of the realm, but also by many of the inferior classes. It was provided with several masters. A notion that has been eagerly maintained by some antiquaries is, that this seminary, instituted by Alfred, is to be considered as the foundation of the University of Oxford.

Up to this time absolute illiteracy seems to have been

common even among the highest classes of the English. We have just seen that, when Alfred established his schools, they were as much needed for the nobility who had reached an advanced or mature age as for their children; and, indeed, the scheme of instruction seems to have been intended from the first to embrace the former as well as the latter, for, according to Asser's account, every person of rank or substance who, either from age or want of capacity, was unable to learn to read himself, was compelled to send to school either his son or a kinsman, or, if he had neither, a servant, that he might at least be read to by some one. The royal charters, instead of the names of the kings, sometimes exhibit their marks, used, as it is frankly explained, in consequence of their ignorance of letters.

The measures begun by Alfred for effecting the literary civilization of his subjects were probably pursued under his successors; but the period of the next three quarters of a century, notwithstanding some short intervals of repose, was on the whole too troubled to admit of much attention being given to the carrying out of his plans, or even, it may be apprehended, the maintenance of what he had set up. Dunstan, indeed, during his administration, appears to have exerted himself with zeal in enforcing a higher standard of learning as well as of morals, or of asceticism, among the clergy. But the renewal of the Danish wars, after the accession of Ethelred, and the state of misery and confusion in which the country was kept from this cause till its conquest by Canute, nearly forty years after, must have again laid in ruins the greater part of its literary as well as ecclesiastical establishments. The concluding portion of the tenth century was thus, probably, a time of as deep intellectual darkness in England as it was throughout most of the rest of Europe. Under Canute, however, who was a wise as well as a powerful sovereign, the schools no doubt rose again and flourished. We have the testimony, so far as it is to be relied upon, of the history attributed to Ingulphus, which professes to be written immediately after the Norman

conquest, and the boyhood of the author of which is made to coincide with the early part of the reign of the Confessor, that at that time seminaries of the higher as well as of elementary learning existed in England. Ingulphus, according to this account, having been born in the city of London, was first sent to school at Westminster; and from Westminster he proceeded to Oxford, where he studied the Aristotelian philosophy and the rhetorical writings of Cicero. This is the earliest express mention of the University of Oxford, if a passage in Asser's work in which the name occurs be, as is generally supposed, spurious, and if the History passing under his name was really written by Ingulphus.

The studies that were cultivated in those ages were few in number and of very limited scope. Alcuin, in a letter to his patron Charlemagne, has enumerated, in the fantastic rhetoric of the period, the subjects in which he instructed his pupils in the school of St. Martin at Paris. "To some," says he, "I administer the honey of the sacred writings; others I try to inebriate with the wine of the ancient classics. I begin the nourishment of some with the apples of grammatical subtlety. I strive to illuminate many by the arrangement of the stars, as from the painted roof of a lofty palace." In plain language, his instructions embraced grammar, the Greek and Latin languages, astronomy, and theology. In the poem in which he gives an account of his own education at York, the same writer informs us that the studies there pursued comprehended, besides grammar, rhetoric, and poetry, "the harmony of the sky, the labour of the sun and moon, the five zones, the seven wandering planets; the laws, risings, and settings of the stars, and the aërial motions of the sea; earthquakes; the nature of man, cattle, birds, and wild beasts, with their various kinds and forms; and the sacred Scriptures."

The English Language.

The earliest historically known fact with regard to the English language is, that it was the language generally, if not universally, spoken by the barbaric invaders, apparently for the greater part of one race or blood, though of different tribes, who, upon the breaking up of the empire of the West in the fifth century, came over in successive throngs from the opposite continent, and, after a protracted struggle, acquired the possession and dominion of the principal portion of the province of Britain. They are stated to have consisted chiefly of Angles and Saxons. But, although it is usual to designate them rather by the general denomination of the Saxons, or Anglo-Saxons, it is probable that the Saxons were in reality only a section of the Angles. The *Angles*, of which term our modern *English* is only another form, appears to have been always recognized among themselves as the proper national appellation. They both concurred, Angles and Saxons alike, after their establishment in Britain, in calling their common country *Angle-land*, or *England*, and their common language *English*—that is, the language of the Angles,—as there can be little doubt it had been called from the time when it first became known as a distinct form of human speech.

This English language, since become so famous, is ordinarily regarded as belonging to the Low-Germanic, or middle, group of the Gothic tongues. That is to say, it is classed with the Dutch and the Flemish, and the dialects generally of the more northern and low-lying part of what was anciently called Germany, under which name were included the countries that we call Holland and the Netherlands, as well as that to which it is now more especially confined. It appears to have been from this middle region, lying directly opposite to Britain, that the Angles and Saxons and other tribes by whom the English language was

brought over to that island chiefly came. At any rate, they certainly did not come from the more elevated region of Southern Germany. Nor does the language present the distinguishing characteristics of a High-Germanic tongue. What is now called the German language, therefore, though of the same Gothic stock, belongs to a different branch from our own. We are only distantly related to the Germans proper, or the race among whom the language and literature now known as the German have originated and grown up. We are, at least in respect of language, more nearly akin to the Dutch and the Flemings than we are to the Germans. It may even be doubted if the English language ought not to be regarded as having more of a Scandinavian than of a purely Germanic character,—as, in other words, more nearly resembling the Danish or Swedish than the modern German. The invading bands by whom it was originally brought over to Britain in the fifth and sixth centuries were in all probability drawn in great part from the Scandinavian countries. At a later date, too, the population of England was directly recruited from Denmark, and the other regions around the Baltic to a large extent. From about the middle of the ninth century the population of all the eastern and northern parts of the country was as much Danish as English. And soon after the beginning of the eleventh century the sovereignty was acquired by the Danes.

The English language, although reckoned among modern languages, is already of respectable antiquity. In one sense, indeed, all languages may be held to be equally ancient; for we can in no case get at the beginning of a language, any more than we can get at the beginning of a lineage. Each is merely the continuation of a preceding one from which, it cannot be separated in any case except by a purely arbitrary mark of distinction. Take two portions of the line at some distance from one another, and they may be very unlike; yet the change which has transformed the one into the other, or produced the one out of the other, has been, even when most active, so gradual, so perfectly free always from

anything that can be called a convulsion or catastrophe, so merely a process of growth, however varying in its rate of rapidity, that there is no precise point at which it can be said to have begun. This is undoubtedly the way in which all languages have come into existence; they have all thus grown out of older forms of speech; none of them have been manufactured or invented. It would seem that human skill could as soon invent a tree as invent a language. The one as well as the other is essentially a natural production.

But, taking a particular language to mean what has always borne the same name, or been spoken by the same nation or race, which is the common or conventional understanding of the matter, the English may claim to be older than the great majority of the tongues now in use throughout Europe. The Basque, perhaps, and the various Celtic dialects might take precedence of it; but hardly any others. No one of the still spoken Germanic or Scandinavian languages could make out a distinct proof of its continuous existence from an equally early date. And the Romance tongues, the Italian, the Spanish, the French, are all, recognized as such, confessedly of much later origin.

The English language is recorded to have been known by that name, and to have been the national speech of the same race, at least since the middle of the fifth century. It was then, as we have seen, that the first settlers by whom it was spoken established themselves in the country of which their descendants have ever since retained possession. Call them either Angles (that is, English) or Saxons, it makes no difference; it is clear that, whether or no the several divisions of the invaders were all of one blood, all branches of a common stock, they spoke all substantially the same language, the proper name of which, as has been stated, was the *Anglish*, or *English*, as *England*, or *Angle-land* (the land of the Angles), was the name which the country received from its new occupants. And these names of *England* and *English* the country and the language have each retained ever since.

Nor can it be questioned that the same tongue was spoken by the same race, or races, long before their settlement in Britain. The Angles figure as one of the nations occupying the forest land of Germany in the picture of that country sketched by Tacitus in the first century of our era.

The most distinct and satisfactory record, however, of a language is afforded by what exists of it in a written form. In applying this test or measure of antiquity, the reasonable rule would seem to be, that, wherever we have the clear beginning or end of a distinct body or continuous series of literary remains, there we have the beginning or end of a language. Thus, of what is called the Mœsogothic we have no written remains of later date than the fourth century (or, at any rate, than the sixth, if we reckon from what is probably the true age of the transcripts which we actually possess); and accordingly we hold the Mœsogothic to be a language which has passed away and perished, notwithstanding that there may be some other language or languages still existing of which there is good reason to look upon it as having been the progenitor. But of the English language we have a continuous succession of written remains since the seventh century at least; that is to say, we have an array of specimens of it from that date such as that no two of them standing next to one another in the order of time could possibly be pronounced to belong to different languages, but only at most to two successive stages of the same language. They afford us a record or representation of the language in which there is no gap. This cannot be said of any other existing European tongue for nearly so great a length of time, unless we may except the two principal Celtic tongues, the Welsh and the Irish.

The movement of the language, however, during this extended existence, has been immense. No language ever ceases to move until it becomes what is called dead, which term, although commonly understood to mean merely that the language has ceased to be spoken, really signifies, here as elsewhere, that the life is gone out of it, which is indeed

the unfailing accompaniment of its ceasing to be used as an oral medium of communication. It cannot grow after that, even if it should still continue to a certain extent to be used in writing, as has been the case with the Sanscrit in the East and the Latin in the West,—except perhaps as the hair and the nails are said sometimes to grow after the animal body is dead. It is only speaking that keeps a language alive; writing alone will not do it. That has no more than a conservative function and effect; the progressive power, the element of fermentation and change, in a language is its vocal utterance.

We shall find that the English language, moving now faster, now slower, throughout the twelve or thirteen centuries over which our knowledge of it extends, although it has never been all at once or suddenly converted from one form into another—which is what the nature of human speech forbids—has yet within that space undergone at least *two* complete revolutions, or, in other words, presents itself to us in *three* distinct forms.

Original English: — commonly called *Saxon*, or *Anglo-Saxon*.

The English which the Angles and Saxons brought over with them from the Continent, when they came and took possession of the greater part of South Britain in the fifth and sixth centuries, differed from the English that we now speak and write in two important respects. It was an unmixed language; and it was what is called a synthetic, in contradistinction to an analytic, language. Its vocables were all of one stock or lineage; and it expressed the relations of nouns and verbs, not by separate words, called auxiliaries and particles, but by terminational or other modifications,—that is, by proper conjugation and declension,—as our present English still does when it says, *I loved* instead of *I did love* or *The King's throne* instead of *The throne*

112104

of the King. These two characteristics are what constitute it a distinct form, or stage, of the language:—its synthetic or generally inflected grammatical structure, and its homogeneous vocabulary.

As a subject of philological study the importance of this earliest known form of the English language cannot be overestimated; and much of what we possess written in it is also of great value for the matter. But the essential element of a literature is not matter but manner. Here too, as in everything else, the soul of the artistic is form;—beauty of form. Now of that what has come down to us written in this primitive English is, at least for us of the present day, wholly or all but wholly destitute.

There is much writing in forms of human speech now extinct, or no longer in oral use, which is still intelligible to us in a certain sort, but in a certain sort only. It speaks to us as anything that is dead can speak to us, and no otherwise. We can decipher it, rather than read it. We make it out as it were merely by the touch, getting some such notion of it as a blind man might get of a piece of sculpture by passing his hand over it. This, for instance, to take an extreme case, is the position in which we stand in reference to the hieroglyphic inscriptions on the ancient monuments of Egypt. They can be read as the multiplication table can be read. But that is all. There may be nothing more in them than there is in the multiplication table; but if there were, we could not get at it. M. Champollion, indeed, in his enthusiasm, saw a vision of an amatory or bacchanalian song laughing under the venerable veil of one of them; but it is plain that this must have been an illusion. A mummy from one of the neighbouring tombs, embalmed some three or four thousand years ago, might almost as soon be expected to give forth a living voice.

Even the ancient Assyrian inscriptions, which are in alphabetical character will certainly never be made to render up to us more than the dead matters of fact that may be buried in them. If there be any grace in the manner in

which the facts are related, any beauty of style in the narrative, it has perished irretrievably. But this is what also appears to happen, in a greater or less degree, in the case even of a language the vocabulary of which we have completely in our possession, and which we are therefore quite able to interpret so far as regards the substance of anything written in it, whenever it has for some time—for a single generation, it may be—ceased both to be spoken and to be written. Something is thus lost, which seems to be irrecoverable. The two great classic tongues, it is to be observed, the old Greek and Latin, although they have both long passed out of popular use, have always continued to be not only studied and read by all cultivated minds throughout Europe, but to be also extensively employed by the learned, at least in writing. And this has proved enough to maintain the modern world in what may be called a living acquaintance with them—such an acquaintance as we have with a person we have conversed with, or a place were we have actually been, as distinguished from our dimmer conception of persons and places known to us only by description. The ancient classic literature charms us as well as informs us. It addresses itself to the imagination, and to our sense of the beautiful, as well as to the understanding. It has shape, and colour, and voice for us, as well as mere substance. Every word, and every collocation of words, carries with it a peculiar meaning, or effect, which is still appreciated. The whole, in short, is felt and enjoyed, not simply interpreted. But a language, which has passed from what we may call its natural condition of true and full vitality as a national speech cannot, apparently, be thus far preserved, with something of the pulse of life still beating in it, merely by such a knowledge of it being kept up as enables us to read and translate it. Still less can a language, the very reading of which has been for a time suspended, and consequently all knowledge whatever of it forgotten, ever be restored to even the appearance of life. It has become a fossil, and cannot be resuscitated, but only dug up. A

thousand facts warrant us in saying that languages, and even words, are subject to decay and dissolution as well as the human beings of whose combined mental and physical organizations they are the mysterious product; and that, once really dead, nothing can reanimate their dust or reclothe their dry bones with flesh.

The original form of the English language is in this state. It is intelligible, but that is all. What is written in it can, in a certain sense, be read, but not so as to bring out from the most elaborate compositions in it any artistic element, except of the most dubious and unsatisfactory kind. Either such an element is not present in any considerable degree, or the language is not now intimately enough known for any one to be able to detect it. If it is not literally dumb, its voice has for us of the present day entirely lost its music. Even of the system of measure and arrangement according to which it is ordinarily disposed for the purposes of poetry we have no proper apprehension or feeling. Certain mechanical principles or rules may have been discovered in obedience to which the versification appears to be constructed; but the verse as verse remains not the less for our ears and hearts wholly voiceless. When it can be distinguished from prose at all it is only by certain marks or characteristics which may indeed be perceived by the eye, or counted on the fingers, but which have no expression that excites in us any mental emotion. It is little better than if the composition merely had the words "This is verse" written over it or under it.

In respect of everything else appertaining to the soul of the language, our understanding of it is about equally imperfect. The consequence is, that, although it can be translated, it cannot be written. The late Mr. Conybeare, indeed, has left us a few specimens of verse in it of his own composition; but his attempts are of the slightest character, and, unadventurous as they are, nobody can undertake to say, except as to palpable points of right or wrong in grammar, whether they are well or ill done. The language,

though so far in our hands as to admit of being analyzed in grammars and packed up in dictionaries, is not recoverable in such a degree as to make it possible to pronounce with certainty whether anything written in it is artistically good or bad. As for learning to speak it, that is a thing as little dreamt of as learning to speak the language of Swift's Houyhnhnms.

When the study of this original form of the national speech was revived in England in the middle of the sixteenth century, it had been for well-nigh four hundred years not only what is commonly called a dead language, but a buried and an utterly forgotten one. It may be questioned if at least for three preceding centuries any one had been able to read it. It was first recurred to as a theological weapon. Much in the same manner as the Reformers generally were drawn to the study of the Greek language in maintaining the accordance of their doctrines with those of the New Testament and of the first ages of Christianity, the English Reformers turned to the oldest writings in the vernacular tongue for evidence of the comparatively unromanized condition of the early English church. In the next age history and law began to receive illustration from the same source. It was not till a considerably later date that the recovered language came to be studied with much of a special view to its literary and philological interest. And it is only within the present century that it has either attracted any attention in other countries, or been investigated on what are now held to be sound principles. The specially theological period of its cultivation may be regarded as extending over the latter half of the sixteenth century, the legal and historical period over the whole of the seventeenth, the philological of the old school over the whole of the eighteenth, and the philological of the modern school over the nineteenth, so far as it has gone.

If the English language as it was written a thousand years ago had been left to itself, and no other action from without had interfered with that of its spontaneous growth

or inherent principles of change and development, it might not have remained so stationary as some more highly-cultivated languages have done throughout an equal space of time, but its form in the nineteenth century would in all probability have been only a comparatively slight modification of what it was in the ninth. It would have been essentially the same language. As the case stands, the English of the ninth century is one language, and the English of the nineteenth century another. They differ at least as much as the Italian differs from the Latin, or as English differs from German. The most familiar acquaintance with the one leaves the other unintelligible. So much is this so that it has long been customary to distinguish them by different names, and to call the original form of the national speech Saxon, or Anglo-Saxon, as if it were not English at all. If the notion be that the dialect in which most of the ancient English that has come down to us is written in that which was in use among the specially Saxon part of the population, that would have been better indicated by calling it, not Anglo-Saxon, but Saxon English. But even such a designation would be inapplicable to those specimens of the language in which there is unquestionably nothing whatever that is specially Saxon, and which recent investigations have shown to be not inconsiderable in amount, as well as of high philological importance; and it would also leave the limitation of the name *English* to the more modern form of the language without any warrant in the facts of the case. Objectionable, however, as may be the common nomenclature, it is still indisputable that we have here, for all practicable purposes, not one language, but two languages. The one may have grown out of the other, and no doubt has done so at least in part or in the main; but in part also the modern language is of quite a distinct stock from the ancient. Of English Literature, therefore, and the English Language, commonly so called, the language and literature of the Angles and Saxons before the twelfth century make no proper part.

The Norman Conquest.

The year 1066 is memorable as that of the Norman Conquest,—the conquest of England by the Normans. The conquests of which we read in the history of nations are of three kinds. Sometimes one population has been overwhelmed by or driven before another as it might have been by an inundation of the sea, or at the most a small number of the old inhabitants of the invaded territory have been permitted to remain on it as the bondsmen of their conquerors. This appears to have been the usual mode of proceeding of the barbarous races, as we call them, by which the greater part of Europe was occupied in early times, in their contests with one another. When the Teuton or Goth from the one side of the Rhine attacked the Celt on the other side, the whole tribe precipitated itself upon what was the object at once of its hostility and of its cupidity. Or even if it was one division of the great Gothic race that made war upon another, as, for instance, the Scandinavian upon any Germanic country, the course that was taken was commonly, or at least frequently, the same. The land was cleared by driving away all who could fly, and the universal massacre of the rest. This primitive kind of invasion and conquest belonged properly to the night of barbarism, but in certain of the extreme parts of the European system something of it survived down to a comparatively late date. Much that we are told of the manner in which Britain was wrested from its previous Celtic occupants by the Angles and Saxons in the fifth and sixth centuries of our era would lead us to think that the enterprise of these invaders was both originally conceived and conducted throughout in this spirit. Nay, for some centuries after this we have the Danes in their descents and inroads upon all parts of the British territories still acting, apparently, in the same style. But, ever from the time of the settlement of the barbarous nations in the

more central provinces of the old Roman empire, another kind of conquest had come into use among them. Corrupted and enfeebled as it was, the advanced civilization which they now encountered seems to have touched them as with a spell, or rather could not but communicate to its assailants something of its own spirit. A policy of mere destruction was evidently not the course to be adopted here. The value of the conquest lay mainly in preserving as far as possible both the stupendous material structures and the other works of art by which the soil was everywhere covered and adorned, and the living intelligence and skill of which all these wonders were the product. Hence the second kind of conquest, in which for the first time the conquerors were contented to share the conquered country, usually according to a strictly defined proportional division, with its previous occupants. But this system too was only transitory. It passed away with the particular crisis which gave birth to it; and then arose the third and last kind of conquest, in which there is no general occupation of the soil of the conquered country by the conquerors, but only its dominion is acquired by them.

The first of the three kinds of conquest, then, has for its object and effect the complete displacement of the ancient inhabitants. It is the kind which is proper to the contests of barbarians with barbarians. Under the second form of conquest the conquerors, recognizing a superiority to themselves in many other things even in those whom their superior force or ferocity has subdued, feel that they will gain most by foregoing something of their right to the wholesale seizure and appropriation of the soil, and neither wholly destroying or expelling its ancient possessors, nor even reducing them to a state of slavery, but only treating them as a lower caste. This is the form proper and natural to the exceptional and rare case of the conquest of a civilized by a barbarous people. Finally, there is that kind of subjugation of one people or country by another which results simply in the overthrow of the independence of the

former, and the substitution in it or over it of a foreign for a native government. This is generally the only kind of conquest which attends upon the wars of civilized nations with one another.

The conquest of England by the Normans in the year 1066 may be regarded as having been professedly a conquest of this last description. The age of both the first and the second kinds of conquest was over, at least everywhere throughout Europe except it may be only along some few portions of its extreme northern boundary. Both the English and the Normans stood indisputably within the pale of civilization, the former boasting the possession both of Christianity and of a national literature for four or five centuries, the latter, if more recently reclaimed from paganism and barbarism, nevertheless already recognized as one of the most brilliantly gifted of European races, and distinguished for their superior aptitude in the arts both of war and of peace, of polity and of song. And the Norman leader, having with him in his enterprise the approval and sanction of the Church, claimed the English crown as his by right; nor were there probably wanting many Englishmen, although no doubt the general national feeling was different, who held his claim to be fully as good in law and justice as that of his native competitor. In taking the style of the Conqueror with respect to England, as he had been wont to take that of the Bastard with reference to his ancestral Normandy, William, as has been often explained, probably meant nothing more than that he had acquired his English sovereignty for himself, by the nomination or bequest of his relation King Edward, or in whatever other way, and had not succeeded to it under the ordinary rule of descent. Such a right of property is still, in the old feudal language, technically described in the law of Scotland as acquired by conquest, and in that of England by purchase, which is etymologically of the same meaning,—the one word being the Latin *Conquæstus*, or *Conquisitio*, the other *Perquisitio*.

And in point of fact the Normans never transferred themselves in a body, or generally, to England. They did not, like the barbarous populations of a preceding age, abandon for this new country the one in which they had previously dwelt. England was never thus taken possession of by the Normans. It was never colonized by these foreigners, or occupied by them in any other than a military sense. The Norman Duke invaded it with an army, raised partly among his own subjects, partly drawn from other regions of the Continent, and so made himself master of it. It received a foreign government, but not at all a new population.

Two causes, however, meeting from opposite points, and working together, soon produced a result which was to some extent the same that would have been produced by a Norman colonization. The first was the natural demand on the part of William's followers or fellow-soldiers for a share in the profits and advantages of their common enterprise, which would probably in any case have compelled him eventually to surrender his new subjects to spoliation; the second was the equally natural restlessness of the latter under the foreign yoke that had been imposed upon them, by which they only faciliated the process of their general reduction to poverty and ruin.

And to the overthrow thus brought about of the native civilization was added, in the present case, the intrusion of another system of social organization, and of another language possessing also its own literature, to take the place of what was passing away. So that here again were two distinct forces harmoniously, though by movements in opposite directions, co-operating to a common end. At the same time that English culture shrunk and faded, Norman culture flourished and advanced. And the two forces were not balanced or in any way connected, but quite independent the one of the other. English culture went down, not under the disastrous influence of the rival light, but from the failure of its own natural aliment, or because the social structure of which it was the product had been smitten with

universal disorganization. It was the withering of life throughout the whole frame that made the eye dim.

The difference, then, between the case of England conquered by the Normans in the eleventh century and that of Italy overrun by the Goths in the fifth, was twofold. First, the Normans did not settle in England, as the barbarous nations of the North did in Italy and other provinces of the subjugated Western empire; but, secondly, on the other hand, the new power which the Norman invasion and conquest of England established in the country was not a barbarism, but another civilization in most respects at least as advanced as the indigenous one;—if younger, only therefore the stronger and more aspiring, and yet, as it proved, not differing so far from that with which it was brought into competition as to be incapable of coalescing with it, if need were, as well as, in other circumstances, with its advantages of position, outshining it or casting it into the shade.

In this way it came to pass that the final result to both the language and the literature of the conquered people was pretty much the same in the two cases. What the barbaric influence, in its action upon the Latin language and literature, wanted of positive vital force it made up for by its mass and weight; the Norman influence, on the contrary, compensated by quality for its deficiency in quantity. There was considerable difference, however, in the process by which the transformation was effected in the two cases, and in the length of time which it occupied. The Gothic barbarism was in the first instance simply destructive; it was not till after some centuries that it came to be visibly or appreciably anything else. But the Norman influence, in virtue of being that, not of a barbarism, but of a civilization, and especially of a civilization still in all the radiant bloom and buoyant pride of youth, never could have been directly destructive; from the first moment of their actual contact it must have communicated to the native civilization something of new life.

One thing further may be noted. In both the cases that we have been comparing the result was the combination, both in the language and the literature, of the same two elements; namely, the Latin (or Classical) and the Gothic (or Germanic, in the largest sense). But the important difference was, that, the basis of the combination remaining in each case what it originally was,—Latin in Italy, in France, in Spain, but Gothic in England—while the language and literature that grew up in each of the former countries came to be in general spirit and character what is called Romance, which must be understood to mean modified Roman, the English language and literature retained their original fundamentally Gothic character, only modified by so much as it has absorbed of a Latin element.

And the remarkable distinction of the English language is, that it is the only one of all the languages of the European world which, thus combining the two elements of the Classic and the Gothic—that is, as we may say, of ancient and of modern civilization—is Gothic, or modern, in its skeleton, or bony system, and in its formative principle, and Classic, or antique, only in what of it is comparatively superficial and non-essential. The other living European languages are either without the Classic element altogether, as are all those of the Scandinavian and Teutonic branches, or have it as their principal and governing element, as is the case with the Italian, the French, and the Spanish, which may all be described as only modernized forms of the Latin. Even in the proportion, too, in which the two elements are combined the English has greatly the advantage over these Romance tongues, as they are called, in none of which is there more than a mere sprinkling of the modern element, whereas in English, although here that constitutes the dominant or more active portion of the compound, the counterpoising ingredient is also present in large quantity, and is influential to a very high degree upon the general character of the language.

It should seem to follow from all this, that, both in its

inner spirit and in its voice, both in its constructional and in its musical genius, the English language, and, through that, English literature, English civilization or culture generally, and the whole temper of the English mind, ought to have a capacity of sympathizing at once with the Classical and the Gothic, with the antique and the modern, with the past and the present, to an extent not to be matched by any other speech or nation of Europe.

It so happens, too, that the political fortunes of this English tongue have been in singular accordance with its constitution and natural adaptation, inasmuch as, at the same time that it stands in this remarkable position in the Old World, its position is still more pre-eminent in the New World, whether that designation be confined to the continent of America or understood as including the entire field of modern colonization in every quarter of the globe. The English are the only really colonizing people now extant. As we remember Coleridge once expressing it, it is the natural destiny of their country, as an island, to be the mother of nations. Their geographical position, concurring with their peculiar genius, and with all the other favourable circumstances of the case, gives them the command of the readiest access to the most distant parts of the earth,—a universal highway, almost as free as is the air to the swarming bees. And, accordingly, all the greatest communities of the future, whether they be seated beyond the Atlantic or beyond the Pacific, promise to be communities of English blood and English speech.

Arabic and other New Learning.

The space of about a thousand years, extending from the overthrow of the Western Roman empire, in the middle of the fifth century, to that of the Eastern, in the middle of the fifteenth, may be divided into two nearly equal parts; the first of which may be considered as that of the gradual

decline, the second as that of the gradual revival of letters. The former, reaching to the close of the tenth century, nearly corresponds, in its close as well as in its commencement, with the domination in England of the Angles and Saxons. In Europe generally, throughout this long space of time, the intellectual darkness, notwithstanding some brief and partial revivals, deepens more and more on the whole, in the same manner as in the natural day the gray of evening passes into the gloom of midnight. The Latin learning, properly so called, may be regarded as terminating with Boethius, who wrote in the early part of the sixth century. The Latin language, however, continued to be used in literary compositions, as well as in the services of the Church, both in our own country and in the other parts of Europe that had composed the old empire of Rome.

The Danish conquest of England, as completed by the accession of Canute, preceded the Norman by exactly half a century, and throughout this space, the country had, with little interruption, enjoyed a government which, if not always national,—and it was that too for rather more than half of the fifty years—was at any rate acknowledged and submitted to by the whole nation. The public tranquillity was scarcely ever disturbed for more than a moment by any internal commotion, and never at all by attacks from abroad. During this interval, therefore, many of the monastic and other schools that had existed in the days of Alfred, Athelstan, and Edgar, but had been swept away or allowed to fall into decay in the disastrous forty years that succeeded the decease of the last-mentioned monarch, were probably re-established. The more frequent communication with the Continent that began in the reign of the Confessor must also have been favourable to the intellectual advancement of the country. The dawn of the revival of letters in England, therefore, may be properly dated from a point about fifty years antecedent to the Norman Conquest, or from not very long after the commencement of the eleventh century.

Still at the date of the Conquest the country was un-

doubtedly in regard to everything intellectual in a very backward state. Ordericus Vitalis, almost a contemporary writer, and himself a native of England, though educated abroad, describes his countrymen generally as having been found by the Normans a rustic and almost illiterate people (*agrestes et pene illiteratos*). The last epithet may be understood as chiefly intended to characterize the clergy, for the great body of the laity at this time were everywhere illiterate. A few years after the Conquest, the king took advantage of the general illiteracy of the native clergy to deprive great numbers of them of their benefices, and to supply their places with foreigners. His real or his only motive for making this substitution may possibly not have been that which he avowed; but he would scarcely have alleged what was notoriously not the fact, even as a pretence.

The Norman Conquest introduced a new state of things in this as in most other respects. That event made England, as it were, a part of the Continent, where, not long before, a revival of letters had taken place scarcely less remarkable, if we take into consideration the circumstances of the time, than the next great revolution of the same kind in the beginning of the fifteenth century. In France, indeed, the learning that had flourished in the time of Charlemagne had never undergone so great a decay as had befallen that of England since the days of Alfred. The schools planted by Alcuin and the philosophy taught by Erigena had both been perpetuated by a line of the disciples and followers of these distinguished masters, which had never been altogether interrupted. But in the tenth century this learning of the West had met and been intermixed with a new learning originally from the East, but obtained directly from the Arab conquerors of Spain. The Arabs had first become acquainted with the literature of Greece in the beginning of the eighth century, and it instantly exercised upon their minds an awakening influence of the same powerful kind with that with which it again kindled Europe seven centuries afterwards. One difference, however, between the two cases

is very remarkable. The mighty effects that arose out of the second revival of the ancient Greek literature in the modern world were produced almost solely by its eloquence and poetry; but these were precisely the parts of it that were neglected by the Arabs. The Greek books which they sought after with such extraordinary avidity were almost exclusively those that related either to metaphysics and mathematics on the one hand, or to medicine, chemistry, botany, and the other departments of physical knowledge, on the other. All Greek works of these descriptions that they could procure they not only translated into their own language, but in course of time illustrated with voluminous commentaries. The prodigious magnitude to which this Arabic literature eventually grew will stagger the reader who has adopted the common notion with regard to what are called the middle or the dark ages. "The royal library of the Fatimites" (sovereigns of Egypt), says Gibbon, "consisted of 100,000 manuscripts, elegantly transcribed and splendidly bound, which were lent, without jealousy or avarice, to the students of Cairo. Yet this collection must appear moderate if we can believe that the Ommiades of Spain had formed a library of 600,000 volumes, 44 of which were employed in the mere catalogues. Their capital Cordova, with the adjacent towns of Malaga, Almeria, and Murcia, had given birth to more than 300 writers, and above 70 public libraries were opened in the cities of the Andalusian kingdom."* The difficulty we have in conceiving the existence of a state of things such as that here described arises in great part from the circumstance of the entire disappearance now, and for so long a period, of all this Arabic power and splendour from the scene of European affairs. But, long extinct as it has been, the dominion of the Arabs in Europe was no mere momentary blaze. It lasted, with little diminution, for nearly five hundred years, a period as long as from the age of Chaucer to the present day, and abundantly sufficient for the growth of a body of literature and science even of the

* Decline and Fall of the Rom. Emp. c. LII.

wonderful extent that has been described. In the tenth century Arabic Spain was the fountain-head of learning in Europe. Thither students were accustomed to repair from every other country to study in the Arabic schools; and many of the teachers in the chief towns of France and Italy had finished their education in these seminaries, and were now diffusing among their countrymen the new knowledge which they had thence acquired. The writings of several of the Greek authors, also, and especially those of Aristotle, had been made generally known to scholars by Latin versions of them made from the Arabic.

There is no trace of this new literature having found its way to England before the Norman Conquest. But that revolution immediately brought it in its train. "The Conqueror himself," observes a writer who has illustrated this subject with a profusion of curious learning, "patronized and loved letters. He filled the bishoprics and abbacies of England with the most learned of his countrymen, who had been educated at the University of Paris, at that time the most flourishing school in Europe. He placed Lanfranc, abbot of the monastery of St. Stephen at Caen, in the see of Canterbury—an eminent master of logic, the subtleties of which he employed with great dexterity in a famous controversy concerning the real presence. Anselm, an acute metaphysician and theologian, his immediate successor in the same see, was called from the government of the abbey of Bec, in Normandy. Herman, a Norman, bishop of Salisbury, founded a noble library in the ancient cathedral of that see. Many of the Norman prelates preferred in England by the Conqueror were polite scholars. Godfrey, prior of St. Swithin's at Winchester, a native of Cambray, was an elegant Latin epigrammatist, and wrote with the smartness and ease of Martial; a circumstance which, by the way, shows that the literature of the monks at this period was of a more liberal cast than that which we commonly annex to their character and profession."* Geoffrey, also,

* Warton's Dissertation on Introduction of Learning into England, prefixed to History of English Poetry, p. CXII. (edit. of 1840).

another learned Norman, came over from the University of Paris, and established a school at Dunstable, where, according to Matthew Paris, he composed a play, called the Play of St. Catharine, which was acted by his scholars, dressed characteristically in copes borrowed from the sacrist of the neighbouring abbey of St. Albans, of which Geoffrey afterwards became abbot. "The king himself," Warton continues, "gave no small countenance to the clergy, in sending his son Henry Beauclerc to the abbey of Abingdon, where he was initiated in the sciences under the care of the abbot Grimbald, and Faritius, a physician of Oxford. Robert d'Oilly, constable of Oxford Castle, was ordered to pay for the board of the young prince in the convent, which the king himself frequently visited. Nor was William wanting in giving ample revenues to learning. He founded the magnificent abbeys of Battle and Selby, with other smaller convents. His nobles and their successors co-operated with this liberal spirit in erecting many monasteries. Herbert de Losinga, a monk of Normandy, bishop of Thetford in Norfolk, instituted and endowed with large possessions a Benedictine abbey at Norwich, consisting of sixty monks. To mention no more instances, such great institutions of persons dedicated to religious and literary leisure, while they diffused an air of civility, and softened the manners of the people in their respective circles, must have afforded powerful incentives to studious pursuits, and have consequently added no small degree of stability to the interests of learning."*

To this it may be added, that most of the successors of the Conqueror continued to show the same regard for learning of which he had set the example. Nearly all of them had themselves received a learned education. Besides Henry Beauclerc, Henry II., whose father Geoffrey Plantagenet, Earl of Anjou, was famous for his literary acquirements, had been carefully educated under the superintendence of his admirable uncle, the Earl of Gloucester; and he appears to

* Ibid. Some inaccuracies in Warton's account of Geoffrey and his play are corrected from a note by Mr. Douce.

have taken care that his children should not want the advantages he had himself enjoyed; for at least the three eldest, Henry, Geoffrey, and Richard, are all noted for their literary as well as their other accomplishments.

What learning existed, however, was still for the most part confined to the clergy. Even the nobility—although it cannot be supposed that they were left altogether without literary instruction—appear to have been very rarely initiated in any of those branches which were considered as properly constituting the scholarship of the times. The familiar knowledge of the Latin language in particular, which was then the key to all other erudition, seems to have been almost exclusively confined to churchmen, and to those few of the laity who embraced the profession of schoolmasters, as some, at least on the Continent, were now wont to do. The contemporary writer of a Life of Becket relates, that when Henry II., in 1164, sent an embassy to the Pope, in which the Earl of Arundel and three other noblemen were associated with an archbishop, four bishops, and three of the royal chaplains, four of the churchmen, at the audience to which they were admitted, first delivered themselves in as many Latin harangues; and then the Earl of Arundel stood up, and made a speech in English, which he began with the words, "We, who are illiterate laymen, do not understand one word of what the bishops have said to your holiness."

The notion that learning properly belonged exclusively to the clergy, and that it was a possession in which the laity were unworthy to participate, was in some degree the common belief of the age, and by the learned themselves was almost universally held as an article of faith that admitted of no dispute. Nothing can be more strongly marked than the tone of contempt which is expressed for the mass of the community, the unlearned vulgar, by the scholars of this period: in their correspondence with one another especially, they seem to look upon all beyond their own small circle as beings of an inferior species. This pride of theirs, however,

worked beneficially upon the whole: in the first place, it was in great part merely a proper estimation of the advantages of knowledge over ignorance; and, secondly, it helped to make the man of the pen a match for him of the sword—the natural liberator of the human race for its natural oppressor. At the same time, it intimates very forcibly at once the comparative rarity of the highly prized distinction, and the depth of the darkness that still reigned far and wide around the few scattered points of light.

Schools and Universities.

Schools and other seminaries of learning, however, were greatly multiplied in this age, and were also elevated in their character, in England as well as elsewhere. Both Archbishop Lanfranc and his successor Anselm exerted themselves with great zeal in establishing proper schools in connexion with the cathedrals and monasteries in all parts of the kingdom; and the object was one which was also patronized and promoted by the general voice of the Church. In 1179 it was ordered by the third general council of Lateran, that in every cathedral there should be appointed and maintained a head teacher, or scholastic, as was the title given to him, who, besides keeping a school of his own, should have authority over all the other schoolmasters of the diocese, and the sole right of granting licences, without which no one should be entitled to teach. In former times the bishop himself had frequently undertaken the office of scholastic of the diocese; but its duties were rarely efficiently performed under that arrangement, and at length they seem to have come to be generally altogether neglected. After the custom was introduced of maintaining it as a distinct office, it was filled in many cases by the most learned persons of the time. And besides these cathedral schools there were others established in all the religious houses, many of which were also of high reputation. It is reckoned that of

religious houses of all kinds there were founded no fewer than five hundred and fifty-seven between the Conquest and the death of King John; and, besides these, there still existed many others that had been founded in earlier times. All these cathedral and conventual schools, however, appear to have been intended exclusively for the instruction of persons proposing to make the Church their profession. But mention is also made of others established both in many of the principal cities and even in the villages, which would seem to have been open to the community at large; for it may be presumed that the laity, though generally excluded from the benefits of a learned education, were not left wholly without the means of obtaining some elementary instruction. Some of these city schools, however, were eminent as institutes of the highest departments of learning. One in particular is mentioned in the History ascribed to Matthew Paris as established in the town of St. Albans, which was presided over by Matthew, a physician, who had been educated at the famous school of Salerno, in Italy, and by his nephew Garinus, who was eminent for his knowledge of the civil and canon laws, and where we may therefore suppose instructions were given both in law and in medicine. According to the account of London by William Stephanides, or Fitz-Stephen, written in the reign of Henry II., there were then three of these schools of a higher order established in London, besides several others that were occasionally opened by distinguished teachers. The London schools, however, do not seem to have been academies of science and the higher learning, like that of St. Albans: Fitz-Stephen's description would rather lead us to infer that, although they were attended by pupils of different ages and degrees of proficiency, they were merely schools of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectics. "On holidays," he says, "it is usual for these schools to hold public assemblies in the churches, in which the scholars engage in demonstrative or logical disputations, some using enthymems, and others perfect syllogisms; some aiming at nothing but to gain the

victory, and make an ostentatious display of their acuteness, while others have the investigation of truth in view. Artful sophists on these occasions acquire great applause; some by a prodigious inundation and flow of words, others by their specious but fallacious arguments. After the disputations other scholars deliver rhetorical declamations, in which they observe all the rules of art, and neglect no topic of persuasion. Even the younger boys in the different schools contend against each other, in verse, about the principles of grammar, and the preterites and supines of verbs."

The twelfth century may be considered as properly the age of the institution of what we now call Universities in Europe, though many of the establishments that then assumed the regular form of universities had undoubtedly existed long before as schools or *studia*. This was the case with the oldest of the European universities, with Bologna and Paris, and also, in all probability, with Oxford and Cambridge. But it may be questioned if even Bologna, the mother of all the rest, was entitled by any organization or constitution it had received to take a higher name than a school or *studium* before the latter part of this century. It is admitted that it was not till about the year 1200 that the school out of which the University of Paris arose had come to subsist as an incorporation, divided into nations, and presided over by a rector.* The University of Oxford, properly so called, is probably of nearly the same antiquity. It seems to have been patronized and fostered by Richard I., as that of Paris was by his great rival, Philip Augustus. Both Oxford and Cambridge had undoubtedly been eminent seats of learning long before this time, as London, St. Albans, and other cities had also been; but there is no evidence that either the one or the other had at an earlier date become anything more than a great school, or even that it was distinguished by any assigned rank or privileges above the other great schools of the kingdom. In the reign of Richard I. we find the University of Oxford recognized as

* See Crevier, Hist. de l'Univ. de Paris I. 255.

an establishment of the same kind with the University of Paris, and as the rival of that seminary.

We have the following account of what is commonly deemed the origin of the University of Cambridge in the continuation of the history of Ingulphus, attributed to Peter of Blois, under the year 1109:—"Joffrid, abbot of Croyland, sent to his manor of Cottenham, near Cambridge, Master Gislebert, his fellow monk, and professor of theology, with three other monks who had followed him into England; who, being very well instructed in philosophical theorems and other primitive sciences, went every day to Cambridge, and, having hired a certain public barn, taught the sciences openly, and in a little time collected a great concourse of scholars; for, in the very second year after their arrival, the number of their scholars from the town and country increased so much that there was no house, barn, nor church capable of containing them. For this reason they separated into different parts of the town, and, imitating the plan of the Studium of Orleans, brother Odo, who was eminent as a grammarian and satirical poet, read grammar, according to the doctrine of Priscian and of his commentator Remigius, to the boys and younger students, that were assigned to him, early in the morning. At one o'clock, brother Terricus, a most acute sophist, read the Logic of Aristotle, according to the Introductions and Commentaries of Porphyry and Averroes,* to those who were further advanced. At three, brother William read lectures on Tully's Rhetoric and Quintilian's Institutions. But Master Gislebert, being ignorant of the English, but very expert in the Latin and French languages, preached in the several churches to the people on Sundays and holidays."** The history in which this

* The works of Averroes, however, who died in 1198, were certainly not in existence at the time here referred to. Either Peter of Blois must have been ignorant of this, or—if he was really the author of the statement—the name must have been the insertion of some later transcriber of his text.

** Petri Blesensis Continuatio ad Historiam Ingulphi: in Rerum Anglicarum Script. Vet.: Oxon. 1684, p. 114. The translation is that given by Henry in his History of Britain.

passage occurs is, as will presently be shown, as apocryphal as that of which it professes to be the continuation; but even if we waive the question of its authenticity, there is here no hint of any sort of incorporation or public establishment whatever; the description is merely that of a school set on foot and conducted by an association of private individuals. And even this private school would seem to have been first opened only in the year 1109, although there may possibly have been other schools taught in the place before. It may be gathered from what is added, that at the time when the account, if it was written by Peter of Blois, must have been drawn up (the latter part of the same century), the school founded by Gislebert and his companions had attained to great celebrity; but there is nothing to lead us to suppose that it had even then become more than a very distinguished school. "From this little fountain," he says, "which hath swelled into a great river, we now behold the city of God made glad, and all England rendered fruitful, by many teachers and doctors issuing from Cambridge, after the likeness of the holy Paradise."

Notwithstanding, however, the rising reputation of Oxford and Cambridge, the most ambitious of the English students continued to resort for part of their education to the more distinguished foreign schools during the whole of the twelfth century. Thus, it is recorded that several volumes of the Arabian philosophy were brought into England by Daniel Merlac, who, in the year 1185, had gone to Toledo to study mathematics. Salerno was still the chief school of medicine, and Bologna of law, although Oxford was also becoming famous for the latter study. But, as a place of general instruction, the University of Paris stood at the head of all others. Paris was then wont to be styled, by way of pre-eminence, the city of Letters. So many Englishmen, or, to speak more strictly, subjects of the English crown, were constantly found among the students at this great seminary, that they formed one of the four nations into which the members of the university were divided. The English stu-

dents are described by their countryman, the poet Nigellus Wireker, in the latter part of the twelfth century, in such a manner as to show that they were already noted for that spirit of display and expense which still makes so prominent a part of our continental reputation:—

Moribus egregii, verbo vultuque venusti,
Ingenio pollent, consilioque vigent;
Dona pluunt populis, et detestantur avaros,
Fercula multiplicant, et sine lege bibunt.*

Of noble manners, gracious look and speech,
Strong sense, with genius brightened, shines in each.
Their free hand still rains largess; when they dine
Course follows course, in rivers flows the wine.

Among the students at the University of Paris in the twelfth century are to be found nearly all the most distinguished names among the learned of every country. One of the teachers, the celebrated Abelard, is said to have alone had as pupils twenty persons who afterwards became cardinals, and more than fifty who rose to be bishops and archbishops. Thomas à Becket received part of his education here. Several of the most eminent teachers were Englishmen. Among these may be particularly mentioned Robert of Melun (so called from having first taught in that city), and Robert White, or Pullus, as he is called in Latin. Robert of Melun, who afterwards became bishop of Hereford, distinguished himself by the zeal and ability with which he opposed the novel views which the rising sect of the Nominalists were then introducing both into philosophy and theology. He is the author of several theological treatises, none of which, however, have been printed. Robert White, after teaching some years at Paris, where he was attended by crowded audiences, was induced to return to his own country, where he is said to have read lectures on theology at Oxford for five years, which greatly contributed to spread the renown of that rising seminary. After

* These verses are quoted by A. Wood, Antiq. Oxon., p. 55. The poem in which they occur is entitled *Speculum Stultorum*, or sometimes *Brunellus* (from its principal personage). It has been repeatedly printed. .

having declined a bishopric offered to him by Henry I., he went to reside at Rome in 1143, on the invitation of Celestine II., and was soon after made a cardinal and chancellor of the holy see. One work written by him has been printed, a summary of theology, under the then common title of The Book of Sentences, which has the reputation of being distinguished by the superior correctness of its style and the lucidness of its method.

Another celebrated name among the Englishmen who are recorded to have studied at Paris in those days is that of Nicolas Breakspear, who afterwards became pope by the title of Adrian IV. But, above all others, John of Salisbury deserves to be here mentioned. It is in his writings that we find the most complete account that has reached us not only of the mode of study followed at Paris, but of the entire learning of the age.

Rise of the Scholastic Philosophy.

At this time those branches of literary and scientific knowledge which were specially denominated the arts were considered as divided into two great classes,—the first or more elementary of which, comprehending Grammar, Rhetoric, and Logic, was called the Trivium; the second, comprehending Music, Arithmetic, Geometry, and Astronomy, the Quadrivium. The seven arts, so classified, used to be thus enumerated in a Latin hexameter:

Lingua, Tropus, Ratio, Numerus, Tonus, Angulus, Astra:

or, with definitions subjoined, in two still more singularly constructed verses,—

Gram. loquitur, *Dia.* vera docet, *Rhet.* verba colorat,
Mus. cadit, *Ar.* numerat, *Geo.* ponderat, *Ast.* colit astra.

John of Salisbury speaks of this system of the sciences as an ancient one in his day. "The Trivium and Quadrivium," he says, in his work entitled Metalogicus, "were so much

admired by our ancestors in former ages, that they imagined they comprehended all wisdom and learning, and were sufficient for the solution of all questions and the removing of all difficulties; for whoever understood the Trivium could explain all manner of books without a teacher; but he who was farther advanced, and was master also of the Quadrivium, could answer all questions and unfold all the secrets of nature." The present age, however, had outgrown the simplicity of this arrangement; and various new studies had been added to the ancient seven, as necessary to complete the circle of the sciences and the curriculum of a liberal education.

It was now, in particular, that Theology first came to be ranked as a science. This was the age of St. Bernard, the last of the Fathers, and of Peter Lombard, the first of the Schoolmen. The distinction between these two classes of writers is, that the latter do, and the former do not, treat their subject in a systematizing spirit. The change was the consequence of the cultivation of the Aristotelian logic and metaphysics. When these studies were first introduced into the schools of the West, they were wholly unconnected with theology. But, especially at a time when all the learned were churchmen, it was impossible that the great instrument of thought and reasoning could long remain unapplied to the most important of all the subjects of thought—the subject of religion. It has already been remarked that John Erigena and other Irish divines introduced philosophy and metaphysics into the discussion of questions of religion as early as the ninth century; and they are consequently entitled to be regarded as having first set the example of the method afterwards pursued by the schoolmen. But, although the influence of their writings may probably be traced in preparing the way for the introduction of the scholastic system, and also, afterwards, perhaps, in modifying its spirit, that system was derived immediately, in the shape in which it appeared in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, from another source. Erigena was a Platonist; the

spirit of his philosophy was that of the school of Alexandria. But the first schoolmen, properly so called, were Aristotelians: they drew their logic and metaphysics originally from the Latin translations of the works of Aristotle made from the Arabic. And they may also have been indebted for some of their views to the commentaries of the Arabic doctors. But, whether they took their method of philosophy entirely from the ancient heathen sage, or in part from his modern Mahomedan interpreters and illustrators, it could in neither case have had at first any necessary or natural alliance with Christianity. Yet it very soon, as we have said, formed this alliance. Both Lanfranc and Anselm, although not commonly reckoned among the schoolmen, were imbued with the spirit of the new learning, and it is infused throughout their theological writings. Abelard soon after, before he was yet a churchman, may almost be considered to have wielded it as a weapon of scepticism. Even so used, however, religion was still the subject to which it was applied. At last came Peter Lombard, who, by the publication, about the middle of the twelfth century, of his celebrated Four Books of Sentences, properly founded the system of what is called the Scholastic Theology. The schoolmen, from the Master of the Sentences, as Lombard was designated, down to Francis Suarez, who died after the commencement of the seventeenth century, were all theologians. Although, however, religious speculation was the field of thought upon which the spirit of the Aristotelian philosophy chiefly exexpended itself, there was scarcely any one of the arts or sciences upon which it did not in some degree seize. The scholastic logic became the universal instrument of thought and study: every branch of human learning was attempted to be pursued by its assistance; and most branches were more or less affected by its influence in regard to the forms which they assumed.

Classical Learning.—Mathematics.—Medicine.—Law.—Books.

The classical knowledge of this period, however, was almost confined to the Roman authors, and some of the most eminent of these were as yet unstudied and unknown. Even John of Salisbury, though a few Greek words are to be found in his compositions, seems to have had only the slightest possible acquaintance with that language. Both it and the Hebrew, nevertheless, were known to Abelard and Eloisa; and it is probable that there were both in England and other European countries a few students of the oriental tongues, for the acquisition of which inducements and facilities must have been presented, not only by the custom of resorting to the Arabic colleges in Spain, and the constant intercourse with the East kept up by the pilgrimages and the crusades, but also by the numbers of learned Jews that were everywhere to be found. In England the Jews had schools in London, York, Lincoln, Lynn, Norwich, Oxford, Cambridge, and other towns, which appear to have been attended by Christians as well as by those of their own persuasion. Some of these seminaries, indeed, were rather colleges than schools. Besides the Hebrew and Arabic languages, arithmetic and medicine are mentioned among the branches of knowledge that were taught in them; and the masters were generally the most distinguished of the rabbis. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the age of Sarchi, the Kimchis, Maïmonides, and other distinguished names, rabbinical learning was in an eminently flourishing state.

There is no certain evidence that the Arabic numerals were yet known in Europe: they certainly were not in general use. Although the Elements of Euclid and other geometrical works had been translated into Latin from the Arabic, the mathematical sciences appear to have been but little studied. "The science of demonstration," says

John of Salisbury, in his Metalogicus, "is of all others the most difficult, and alas! is almost quite neglected, except by a very few who apply to the study of the mathematics, and particularly of geometry. But this last is at present very little attended to amongst us, and is only studied by some persons in Spain, Egypt, and Arabia, for the sake of astronomy. One reason of this is, that those parts of the works of Aristotle that relate to the demonstrative sciences are so ill translated, and so incorrectly transcribed, that we meet with insurmountable difficulties in every chapter." The name of the mathematics at this time, indeed, was chiefly given to the science of astrology. "Mathematicians," says Peter of Blois, "are those who, from the position of the stars, the aspect of the firmament, and the motions of the planets, discover things that are to come." Astronomy, however, or the true science of the stars, which was zealously cultivated by the Arabs in the East and in Spain, seems also to have had some cultivators among the learned of Christian Europe. Latin translations existed of several Greek and Arabic astronomical works. In the History attributed to Ingulphus, is the following curious description of a sort of scheme or representation of the planetary system called the Nadir, which is stated to have been destroyed when the abbey of Croyland was burnt in 1091: "We then lost a most beautiful and precious table, fabricated of different kinds of metals, according to the variety of the stars and heavenly signs. Saturn was of copper, Jupiter of gold, Mars of iron, the Sun of latten, Mercury of amber, Venus of tin, the Moon of silver. The eyes were charmed, as well as the mind instructed, by beholding the colure circles, with the zodiac and all its signs, formed with wonderful art, of metals and precious stones, according to their several natures, forms, figures, and colours. It was the most admired and celebrated Nadir in all England." These last words would seem to imply that such tables were then not uncommon. This one, it is stated, had been presented to a former abbot of Croyland by a king of France.

John of Salisbury, in his account of his studies at Paris, makes no mention either of medicine or of law. With regard to the former, indeed, he elsewhere expressly tells us that the Parisians themselves used to go to study it at Salerno and Montpellier. By the beginning of the thirteenth century, however, we find a school of medicine established at Paris, which soon became very celebrated. Of course there were, at an earlier date, persons who practised the medical art in that city. The physicians in all the countries of Europe at this period were generally churchmen. Many of the Arabic medical works were early translated into Latin; but the Parisian professors soon began to publish treatises on the art of their own. The science of the physicians of this age, besides comprehending whatever was to be learned respecting the diagnostics and treatment of diseases from Hippocrates, Galen, and the other ancient writers, embraced a considerable body of botanical and chemical knowledge. Chemistry in particular the Arabs had carried far beyond the point at which it had been left by the ancients. Of anatomy little could as yet be accurately known, while the dissection of the human subject was not practised. Yet it would appear that physicians and surgeons were already beginning to be distinguished from each other. Both the canon and civil laws were also introduced into the routine of study at the University of Paris soon after the time when John of Salisbury studied there. The canon law was originally considered to be a part of theology, and only took the form of a separate study after the publication of the systematic compilation of it called the Decretum of Gratian, in 1151. Gratian was a monk of Bologna, and his work, not the first collection of the kind, but the most complete and the best-arranged that had yet been compiled, was immediately introduced as a text-book in that university. It may be regarded as having laid the foundation of the science of the canon law, in the same manner as the system of the scholastic philosophy was founded by Peter Lombard's Book of Sentences. Regular lecturers upon it very soon appeared

at Orleans, at Paris, at Oxford, and all the other chief seats of learning in western Christendom; and before the end of the twelfth century no other study was more eagerly pursued, or attracted greater crowds of students, than that of the canon law. One of its first and most celebrated teachers at Paris was Girard la Pucelle, an Englishman, who afterwards became bishop of Lichfield and Coventry. Girard taught the canon law in Paris from 1160 to 1177; and, in consideration of his distinguished merits and what was deemed the great importance of his instructions, he received from Pope Alexander III. letters exempting him from the obligation of residing on his preferments in England while he was so engaged; this being, it is said, the first known example of such a privilege being granted to any professor.* The same professors who taught the canon law taught also, along with it, the civil law, the systematic study of which, likewise, took its rise in this century, and at the University of Bologna, where the Pandects of Justinian, of which a more perfect copy than had before been known is said to have been found in 1137 at Amalfi,** were arranged and first lectured upon by the German Irnerius,—the Lamp of the Law, as he was called,—about the year 1150. Both the canon and the civil law, however, are said to have been taught a few years before this time at Oxford by Roger, surnamed the Bachelor, a monk of Bec, in Normandy. The study was, from the first, vehemently opposed by the practitioners of the common law; but, sustained by the influence of the Church, and eventually also favoured by the government, it rose above all attempts to put it down. John of Salisbury affirms that, by the blessing of God, the more it was persecuted the more it flourished. Peter of Blois, in one of his letters, gives us the following curious account of the ardour with which it was

* Crevier, Hist. de l'Univ. de Paris, 1. 244.

** "The discovery of the Pandects at Amalfi," says Gibbon, "is first noticed (in 1501) by Ludovicus Bolognínus, on the faith of a Pisan Chronicle, without a name or date. The whole story, though unknown to the twelfth century, embellished by ignorant ages, and suspected by rigid criticism, is not however destitute of much internal probability."

pursued under the superintendence of Archbishop Theobald: —"In the house of my master, the Archbishop of Canterbury, there are several very learned men, famous for their knowledge of law and politics, who spend the time between prayers and dinner in lecturing, disputing, and debating causes. To us all the knotty questions of the kingdom are referred, which are produced in the common hall, and every one in his order, having first prepared himself, declares, with all the eloquence and acuteness of which he is capable, but without wrangling, what is wisest and safest to be done. If God suggests the soundest opinion to the youngest amongst us, we all agree to it without envy or detraction."*

Study in every department must have been still greatly impeded by the scarcity and high price of books; but their multiplication now went on much more rapidly than it had formerly done. We have already noticed the immense libraries said to have been accumulated by the Arabs, both in their oriental and European seats of empire. No collections to be compared with these existed anywhere in Christian Europe; but, of the numerous monasteries that were planted in every country, few were without libraries of greater or less extent. A convent without a library, it used to be proverbially said, was like a castle without an armoury. When the monastery of Croyland was burnt in 1091, its library, according to Ingulphus, consisted of 900 volumes, of which 300 were very large. "In every great abbey," says Warton, "there was an apartment called the Scriptorium; where many writers were constantly busied in transcribing not only the service-books for the choir, but books for the library. The Scriptorium of St. Albans abbey was built by Abbot Paulin, a Norman, who ordered many volumes to be written there, about the year 1080. Archbishop Lanfranc furnished the copies. Estates were often granted for the support of the Scriptorium. . . . I find some of the classics written in the English monasteries very early. Henry, a Benedictine monk of Hyde Abbey, near Winchester, tran-

* Ep. VI., as translated in Henry's History of Britain.

scribed in the year 1178 Terence, Boethius, Suetonius, and Claudian. Of these he formed one book, illuminating the initials, and forming the brazen bosses of the covers with his own hands." Other instances of the same kind are added. The monks were much accustomed both to illuminate and to bind books, as well as to transcribe them. "The scarcity of parchment," it is afterwards observed, "undoubtedly prevented the transcription of many other books in these societies. About the year 1120, one Master Hugh, being appointed by the convent of St. Edmondsbury, in Suffolk, to write and illuminate a grand copy of the Bible for their library, could procure no parchment for this purpose in England."* Paper made of cotton, however, was certainly in common use in the twelfth century, though no evidence exists that that manufactured from linen rags was known till about the middle of the thirteenth.

The Latin Language.

During the whole of the Anglo-Norman period, and down to a much later date, in England as in the other countries of Christendom, the common language of literary composition, in all works intended for the perusal of the educated classes, was still the Latin, the language of religion throughout the western world, as it had been from the first ages of the Church. Christianity had not only, through its monastic institutions, saved from destruction, in the breaking up of the Roman empire, whatever we still possess of ancient literature, but had also, by its priesthood and its ritual, preserved the language of Rome in some sort still a living and spoken tongue—corrupted indeed by the introduction of many new and barbarous terms, and illegitimate acceptations, and by much bad taste in style and phraseology, but still wholly unchanged in its grammatical forms, and even in its vocabulary much less altered than it probably would have been if it

* Introd. of Learning into England, p. cxvi.

had continued all the while to be spoken and written by an unmixed Roman population. It would almost seem as if, even in the Teutonic countries, such as England, the services of the church, uninterruptedly repeated in the same words since the first ages, had kept up in the general mind something of a dim traditionary understanding of the old imperial tongue. We read of some foreign ecclesiastics, who could not speak English, being accustomed to preach to the people in Latin. A passage quoted above from the Croyland History seems to imply that Gislebert, or Gilbert, one of the founders of the University of Cambridge, used to employ Latin as well as French on such occasions. So, Giraldus Cambrensis tells us that, in a progress which he made through Wales in 1186, to assist Archbishop Baldwin in preaching a new crusade for the delivery of the Holy Land, he was always most successful when he appealed to the people in a Latin sermon; he asserts, indeed, that they did not understand a word of it, although it never failed to melt them into tears, and to make them come in crowds to take the cross. No doubt they were acted upon chiefly through their ears and their imaginations, and for the most part only supposed that they comprehended what they were listening to; but it is probable that their self-deception was assisted by their catching a word or phrase here and there the meaning of which they really understood. The Latin tongue must in those days have been heard in common life on a thousand occasions from which it has now passed away. It was the language of all the learned professions, of law and physic as well as of divinity, in all their grades. It was in Latin that the teachers at the Universities (many of whom, as well as of the ecclesiastics, were foreigners) delivered their prelections in all the sciences, and that all the disputations and other exercises among the students were carried on. It was the same at all the monastic schools and other seminaries of learning. The number of persons by whom these various institutions were attended was very great: they were of all ages from boyhood to advanced manhood; and poor scholars

must have been found in every village, mingling with every class of the people, in some one or other of the avocations which they followed in the intervals of their attendance at the Universities, or after they had finished their education, from parish priests down to wandering beggars.

Latin Chroniclers.

By far the most valuable portion of our Latin literature of this age consists of the numerous historical works which it has bequeathed to us. These works have a double interest for the English reader, belonging to the country and the age in which they were written by their subject as well as by their authorship. All that we can do here, however, is to enumerate the principal collections that have been made in modern times of our old Latin historians or chroniclers:—

1. Rerum Britannicarum, id est, Angliæ, Scotiæ, Vicinarumque Insularum ac Regionum, Scriptores Vetustiores ac Præcipui: (a Hier. Commelino). Fol. Heidelb. & Lugd. 1587.

2. Rerum Anglicarum Scriptores post Bedam Præcipui, ex Vetustissimis MSS. nunc primum in lucem editi: (a Hen. Savile). Fol. Lon. 1596, and Francof. 1601.

3. Anglica, Normannica, Hibernica, Cambrica, a veteribus Scripta, ex Bibl. Guilielmi Camdeni. Fol. Francof. 1602 and 1603.

4. Historiæ Normannorum Scriptores Antiqui; studio Andreæ Duchesne. Fol. Paris. 1619.

5. Historiæ Anglicanæ Scriptores Decem, ex vetustis MSS. nunc primum in lucem editi: (a Rog. Twysden et Joan. Selden). Fol. Lon. 1652.

6. Rerum Anglicarum Scriptorum Veterum Tomus Imus; Quorum Ingulfus nunc primum integer, ceteri nunc primum, prodeunt; (a Joan. Fell, vel potius Gul. Fulman). Fol.

Oxon. 1684. (Sometimes incorrectly cited as the 1st vol. of Gale's Collection.)

7. Historiæ Anglicanæ Scriptores Quinque, ex vetustis Codd. MSS. nunc primum in lucem editi: (a THOM. GALE). Fol. Oxon. 1687. (This is properly the 2nd vol. of Gale's Collection.)

8. Historiæ Britannicæ, Saxonicæ, Anglo-Danicæ, Scriptores Quindecim, ex vetustis Codd. MSS. editi, opera THOMÆ GALE. Fol. Oxon. 1691. (This is properly the 1st vol. of Gale's Collection, though often cited as the 3rd).

9. Anglia Sacra; sive Collectio Historiarum . . . de Archiepiscopis et Episcopis Angliæ; (a HENRICO WHARTON). 2 Tom. Fol. Lon. 1691.

10. Historiæ Anglicanæ Scriptores Varii, e Codd. MSS. nunc primum editi: (a JOS. SPARKE). Fol. Lon. 1723.

11. Historiæ Anglicanæ circa tempus Conquestus Angliæ a Guilielmo Notho, Normannorum Duce, selecta Monumenta; excerpta ex volumine And. Duchesne; cum Notis, &c.: (a FRANCISCO MASERES). 4to. Lon. 1807.

12. Monumenta Historica Britannica; or, Materials for the History of Britain from the earliest period to the end of the reign of King Henry VII. Published by command of her Majesty. Vol. 1st (extending to the Norman Conquest). Fol. Lon. 1848. (By PETRIE, SHARPE, and HARDY.)

To which may be added:—

13. The series of works printed by the HISTORICAL SOCIETY, from 1838 to 1856, extending to 29 vols. 8vo.; and,

14. The series entitled Rerum Britannicarum Medii Ævi Scriptores, or Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages. Published by authority of her Majesty's Treasury, under the direction of the Master of the Rolls. 8vo. Lon. 1857, &c.

The French Language in England.

It is commonly asserted that for some reigns after the Norman Conquest the exclusive language of government and legislation in England was the French,—that all pleadings, at least in the supreme courts, were carried on in that language—and that in it all deeds were drawn up and all laws promulgated. "This popular notion," observes a late learned writer, "cannot be easily supported. . . . Before the reign of Henry III. we cannot discover a deed or law drawn or composed in French. Instead of prohibiting the English language, it was employed by the Conqueror and his successors in their charters until the reign of Henry II., when it was superseded, not by the French but by the Latin language, which had been gradually gaining, or rather regaining, ground; for the charters anterior to Alfred are invariably in Latin."* So far was the Conqueror from showing any aversion to the English language, or making any such attempt as is ascribed to him to effect its abolition, that, according to Ordericus Vitalis, when he first came over he strenuously applied himself to learn it for the special purpose of understanding, without the aid of an interpreter, the causes that were pleaded before him, and persevered in that endeavour till the tumult of many other occupations, and what the historian calls "durior aetas"—a more iron time**—of necessity compelled him to give it up.† The common statement rests on the more than suspicious authority of the History attributed to Ingulphus, the fabricator of which, in his loose and ignorant account of the matter, has set down this falsehood along with some other things that are true or probable. Even before the Conquest, the Confessor himself, according to this writer, though a native of England, yet, from his education and

* Sir Francis Palgrave, Rise and Progress of the English Commonwealth. vol. i. p. 56.

** Quid nos dura refugimus aetas?—Hor. Od. i. 35.

† Excerpta ex Libro iv. Orderici Vitalis, p. 247; edit. Maseres.

long residence in Normandy, had become almost a Frenchman; and when he succeeded to the English throne he brought over with him great numbers of Normans whom he advanced to the highest dignities in the church and the state. "Wherefore," it is added, "the whole land began, under the influence of the king and the other Normans introduced by him, to lay aside the English customs, and to imitate the manners of the French in many things; for example, all the nobility in their courts began to speak French as a great piece of gentility, to draw up their charters and other writings after the French fashion, and to grow ashamed of their old national habits in these and many other particulars."* Further on we are told, "They [the Normans] held the language [of the natives] in such abhorrence that the laws of the land and the statutes of the English kings were drawn out in the Gallic [or French] tongue; and to boys in the schools the elements of grammar were taught in French and not in English; even the English manner of writing was dropped, and the French manner introduced in all charters and books."** The facts are more correctly given by other old writers, who, although not contemporary with the Conquest, are probably of as early a date as the compiler of the Croyland History. The Dominican friar Robert Holcot, writing in the earlier part of the fourteenth century, informs us that there was then no institution of children in the old English—that the first language they learned was the French, and that through that tongue they were afterwards taught Latin; and he adds that this was a practice which had been introduced at the Conquest, and which had continued ever since.*** About the middle of the same century Ranulf Higden, in his Polychronicon, says, as the passage is translated by Trevisa, "This apayringe (impairing) of the birthe tonge is by cause of tweye thinges; oon is

* Ingulphi Historia, in Savile, 895; or in Fulman, 62. The translation, which is sufficiently faithful, is Henry's.

** Id. Savile, 901; Fulman, 71.

*** Lect. in Libr. Sapient. Lect. II., 4to. Paris, 1518; as referred to by Warton, Hist. Eng. Poetry, I. 5.

for children in scole, aghenes (against) the usage and maner of alle other naciouns, beth (be) compelled for to leve her (their) owne langage, and for to constrewe her lessouns and her thingis a Frensche, and haveth siththe (have since) that the Normans come first into England. Also gentil mennes children beth ytaught (be taught) for to speke Frensche from the time that thei beth rokked in her cradel, and cunneth (can) speke and playe with a childes brooche; and uplondish (rustic) men wol likne hem self (will liken themselves) to gentilmen, and fondeth (are fond) with grete bisynesse for to speke Frensche, for to be the more ytold of."* The teachers in the schools, in fact, were generally, if not universally, ecclesiastics; and the Conquest had normanized the church quite as much as the state. Immediately after that revolution great numbers of foreigners were brought over, both to serve in the parochial cures and to fill the monasteries that now began to multiply so rapidly. These churchmen must have been in constant intercourse with the people of all classes in various capacities, not only as teachers of youth, but as the instructors of their parishioners from the altar, and as holding daily and hourly intercourse with them in all the relations that subsist between pastor and flock. They probably in this way diffused their own tongue throughout the land of their adoption to a greater extent than is commonly suspected. We shall have occasion, as we proceed, to mention some facts which would seem to imply that in the twelfth century the French language was very generally familiar to the middle classes in England, at least in the great towns. It was at any rate the only language spoken for some ages after the Conquest by our kings, and not only by nearly all the nobility, but by a large proportion even of the inferior landed proprietors, most of whom also were of Norman birth or descent. Ritson, in his rambling, incoherent Dissertation on Romance and Minstrelsy, prefixed to his Ancient English Metrical

* Quoted from MS. Harl. 1900, by Tyrwhitt, in Essay on the Language and Versification of Chaucer, prefixed to his edition of the Canterbury Tales.

Romances, has collected, but not in the most satisfactory manner, some of the evidence we have as to the speech of the first Norman kings. He does not notice what Ordericus Vitalis tells us of the Conqueror's meritorious attempt, which does not seem, however, to have been more successful than such experiments on the part of grown-up gentlemen usually are; so that he may be allowed to be correct enough in the assertion with which he sets out, that we have no information "that William the Bastard, his son Rufus, his daughter Maud, or his nephew Stephen, did or could speak the Anglo-Saxon or English language." Reference is then made to a story told in what is called Bromton's Chronicle respecting Henry II., which, however, is not very intelligible in all its parts, though Ritson has slurred over the difficulties. As Henry was passing through Wales, the old chronicler relates, on his return from Ireland in the spring of 1172, he found himself on a Sunday at the castle of Cardiff, and stopped there to hear mass; after which, as he was proceeding to mount his horse to be off again, there presented itself before him a somewhat singular apparition, a man with red hair and a round tonsure,* lean and tall, attired in a white tunic and barefoot, who, addressing him in the Teutonic tongue, began, "Gode Olde Kinge,"** and proceeded to deliver a command from Christ, as he said, and his mother, from John the Baptist and Peter, that he should suffer no traffic or servile works to be done throughout his dominions on the sabbath-day, except only such as pertained to the use of food; "which command, if thou observest," concluded the speaker, "whatever thou mayest undertake thou shalt happily accomplish." The king immediately, speaking in French, desired the soldier

* Tonsura *rotunda*. Scriptores Decem, 1079. The epithet would seem to imply that there were still in Wales some priests of the ancient British Church who retained the old national crescent-shaped tonsure, now deemed heretical.

** Henry and his son of the same name were commonly distinguished as the Old and the Young King from the date of the coronation of the latter (whom his father survived) in 1170.

who held the bridle of his horse to ask the rustic if he had dreamed all this. The soldier made the inquiry, as desired, in English; and then, it is added, the man replied in the same language as before, and addressing the king said, "Whether I have dreamed it or no, mark this day; for, unless thou shalt do what I have told thee, and amend thy life, thou shalt within a year's time hear such news as thou shalt mourn to the day of thy death." And, having so spoken, the man vanished out of sight. With the calamities which of course ensued to the doomed king we have here nothing to do. Although the chronicler reports only the three commencing words of the prophet's first address in what he calls the Teutonic tongue, there can be no doubt, we conceive, that the rest, though here translated into Latin, was also delivered in the same Teutonic (by which, apparently, can only have been meant the vernacular English, or what is commonly called Saxon). The man would not begin his speech in one language, and then suddenly break away into another. But, if this was the case, Henry, from his reply, would appear to have understood English, though he might not be able to speak it. The two languages, thus subsisting together, were probably both understood by many of those who could only speak one of them. We have another evidence of this in the fact of the soldier, as we have seen, speaking English and also understanding the king's French. It is, we suppose, merely so much affectation or bad rhetoric in the chronicler that makes him vary his phrase for the same thing from "the Teutonic tongue" *(Teutonica lingua)* in one place to "English" *(Anglicè)* in another, and immediately after to "the former language" *(lingua priori)*; for the words which he gives as Teutonic are English words, and, when Henry desired the soldier to address the priest in English and the soldier did so, it must have been because that was the language in which he had addressed the king.*

* A somewhat different view of this story is taken by Mr. Luders in his tract On the Use of the French Language in our ancient Laws and Acts of

"King Richard," Ritson proceeds, "is never known to have uttered a single English word, unless one may rely on the evidence of Robert Mannyng for the express words, when, of Isaac King of Cyprus, 'O dele,' said the king, 'this is a fole Breton.' The latter expression seems proverbial, whether it alludes to the Welsh or to the Armoricans, because Isaac was neither by birth, though he might be both by folly. Many great nobles of England, in this century, were utterly ignorant of the English language." As an instance, he mentions the case, before noticed by Tyrwhitt, of William Longchamp, bishop of Ely, chancellor and prime minister to Richard I., who, according to a remarkable account in a letter of his contemporary Hugh bishop of Coventry, preserved by Hoveden, did not know a word of English.* The only fact relating to this subject in connexion with John or his reign that Ritson brings forward, is the speech which that king's ambassador, as related by Matthew Paris, made to the King of Morocco:—"Our nation is learned in three idioms, that is to say, Latin, French, and English."** This would go to support the conclusion that both the French and the Latin languages were at this time not unusually spoken by persons of education in England.

State. (Tracts on Various Subjects, p. 400.) He remarks: "The author does not tell why the ghost spoke German to the king in Wales, or how this German became all at once good English; nor how it happened that the groom addressed the German ghost in English." Mr. Luders, therefore, understands "the Teutonic tongue" to mean, not *English*, but *German*.

* Linguam Anglicanam prorsus ignorabat.—Hoveden, 704. Ritson, omitting all mention either of Hoveden or Tyrwhitt, chooses to make a general reference to the chronicle called Bromton's, a later compilation, the author of which (vide col. 1227) has quietly appropriated Bishop Hugh's Letter, and made it part of his narrative.

** This was a secret mission despatched by John, the historian tells us, in 1213, "ad Admiralium Murmelium, regem magnum Aphricæ, Marrochiæ, et Hispaniæ, quem vulgus Miramumelinum vocat." The words used by Thomas Herdington, the one of the three commissioners selected, on account of his superior gift of eloquence, to be spokesman, were "Gens nostra speciosa et ingeniosa tribus pollet idiomatibus erudita, scilicet Latino, Gallico, et Anglico." —Matt. Paris, 243.

The Langue d'Oc and the Langue d'Oyl.

French as well as Latin was at least extensively employed among us in literary composition. The Gauls, the original inhabitants of the country now called France, were a Celtic people, and their speech was a dialect of the same great primitive tongue which probably at one time prevailed over the whole of Western Europe, and is still vernacular in Ireland, in Wales, and among the Highlanders of Scotland. After the country became a Roman province this ancient language gradually gave place to the Latin; which, however, here as elsewhere, soon became corrupted in the mouths of a population mixing it with their own barbarous vocables and forms, or at least divesting it of many of its proper characteristics in their rude appropriation of it. But, as different depraving or obliterating influences operated in different circumstances, and a variety of kinds of bad Latin were thus produced in the several countries which had been provinces of the empire, so even within the limits of Gaul there grew up two such distinct dialects, one in the south, another in the north. All these forms of bastard Latin, wherever they arose, whether in Italy, in Spain, or in Gaul, were known by the common name of Roman, or Romance, languages, or the Rustic Roman (Romana Rustica), and were by that generic term distinguished from the barbarian tongues, or those that had been spoken by the Celtic, German, and other uncivilized nations before they came into communication with the Romans. From them have sprung what are called the Latin languages of modern Europe—the Italian, the Spanish, and the Portuguese, as well as what we now denominate the French. The Romance spoken in the south of Gaul appears to have been originally nearly, if not altogether, identical with that spoken in the north-east of Spain; and it always preserved a close resemblance and affinity to that and the other Romance dialects of Spain and

Italy. It is in fact to be accounted a nearer relation of the Spanish and Italian than of the modern French. The latter is exclusively the offspring of the Romance of northern Gaul, which, both during its first growth and subsequently, was acted upon by different influences from those which modified the formation of the southern tongue. It is probable that whatever it retained of the Celtic ingredient to begin with was, if not stronger or of larger quantity than what entered into the Romance dialect of the south, at any rate of a somewhat different character; but the peculiar form it eventually assumed may be regarded as having been mainly owing to the foreign pressure to which it was twice afterwards exposed, first by the settlement of the Franks in the north and north-east of Gaul in the fifth century (while the Visigoths and Burgundians had spread themselves over the south), and again by that of the Normans in the north-west in the tenth. What may have been the precise nature or amount of the effect produced upon the Romance tongue of Northern Gaul by either or both of these Teutonic occupations of the country, it is not necessary for our present purpose to inquire; it is sufficient to observe that that dialect could not fail to be thereby peculiarly affected, and its natural divergence from the southern Romance materially aided and promoted. The result, in fact, was that the two dialects became two distinct languages, differing from one another more than any two other of the Latin languages did —the Italian, for example, from the Spanish, or the Spanish from the Portuguese, and even more than the Romance of the south of Gaul differed from that either of Italy or of Spain. This southern Romance, it only remains further to be observed, came in course of time to be called the Provençal tongue; but it does not appear to have received this name till, in the beginning of the twelfth century, the county of Provence had fallen to be inherited by Raymond Berenger, Count of Catalonia, who thereupon transferred his court to Arles, and made that town the centre and chief seat of the literary cultivation which had previously flourished at Bar-

celona. There had been poetry written in the Romance of Southern Gaul before this; but it was not till now that the Troubadours, as the authors of that poetry called themselves, rose into much celebrity; and hence it has been maintained, with great appearance of reason, that what is best or most characteristic about the Provençal poetry is really not of French but of Spanish origin. In that case the first inspiration may probably have been caught from the Arabs. The greater part of Provence soon after passed into the possession of the Counts of Toulouse, and the Troubadours flocked to that city. But the glory of the Provençal tongue did not last altogether for much more than a century; and then, when it had ceased to be employed in poetry and literature, and had declined into a mere provincial patois, it and the northern French were wont to be severally distinguished by the names of the Langue d'Oc (sometimes called by modern writers the Occitanian) and the Langue d'Oyl, from the words for *yes*, which were *oc* in the one, and *oyl*, afterwards *oy* or *oui*, in the other. Dante mentions them by these appellations, and with this explanation, in his treatise De Vulgari Eloquio, written in the end of the thirteenth or beginning of the fourteenth century; and one of them still gives its name to the great province of Languedoc, where the dialect formerly so called yet subsists as the popular speech, though, of course, much changed and debased from what it was in the days of its old renown, when it lived on the lips of rank and genius and beauty, and was the favourite vehicle of love and song.

The Langue d'Oyl, on the other hand, formerly spoken only to the north of the Loire, has grown up into what we now call the French language, and has become, at least for literary purposes, and for all the educated classes, the established language of the whole country. Some fond students of the remains of the other dialect have deplored this result as a misfortune to France, which they contend would have had a better modern language and literature if the Langue d'Oc, in the contest between the two, had pre-

vailed over the Langue d'Oyl. It is probable, indeed, that accident and political circumstances have had more to do in determining the matter as it has gone than the merits of the case; but in every country as well as in France—in Spain, in Italy, in Germany, in England—some other of the old popular dialects than the one that has actually acquired the ascendancy has in like manner had its enthusiastic reclaimers against the unjust fortune which has condemned it to degradation or oblivion; and we may suspect that the partiality which the mind is apt to acquire for whatever it has made the subject of long investigation and study, especially if it be something which has been generally neglected, and perhaps in some instances a morbid sympathy with depression and defeat, which certain historical and philosophical speculators have in common with the readers and writers of sentimental novels, are at the bottom of much of this unavailing and purposeless lamentation. The question is one which we have hardly the means of solving, even if any solution of it which might now be attainable could have any practical effect. The Langue d'Oyl is now unalterably established as the French language; the Langue d'Oc is, except as a local patois, irrecoverably dead. Nor are there wanting French archæologists, quite equal in knowledge of the subject to their opponents, who maintain that in this there is nothing to regret, but the contrary—that the northern Romance tongue was as superior to the southern intrinsically as it has proved in fortune, and that its early literature was of far higher value and promise than the Provençal.*

* What has come to be called the French tongue, it may be proper to notice, has no relationship whatever to that of the proper French, or Franks, who were a Teutonic people, speaking a purely Teutonic language, resembling the German, or more nearly the Flemish This old Teutonic French, which the Franks continued to speak for several centuries after their conquest of Gaul, is denominated by philologists the *Frankish*, or *Francic*. The modern French, which is a Latin tongue, has come to be so called from the accident of the country in which it was spoken having been conquered by the French or Franks—the conquerors, as in other cases, in course of time adopting the language of the conquered, and bestowing upon it their own name.

Vernacular Language and Literature:—A.D. 1066—1216.

From the Norman Conquest to the termination of the reign of the seventh Norman sovereign, King John, is almost exactly a century and a half, even to a day. The victory of Hastings was gained on the 14th of October, 1066, and John died on the 19th of October, 1216. His death, happening at the time it did, was probably an event of the greatest importance. The political constitution, or system of government, established by the Conquest,—a system of pure monarchy or absolutism—had been formally brought to an end the year before by the grant of the Great Charter wrung from the crown by the baronage, which at any rate tempered the monarchical despotism by the introduction of the aristocratic element into the theory of the constitution; but this might have proved little more than a theoretical or nominal innovation if John had lived. His death, and the non-age of his son and heir, left the actual management of affairs in the hands of those by whom the constitutional reform had been brought about; and that reform became a practical reality. At the least, its legal character and authority never were disputed; no attempt ever was made to repeal it; on the contrary it was ratified no less than six times in the single reign of Henry III., John's successor; and it has retained its proper place at the head of the Statute Book down to our own day. Its proper place; for it is indeed our first organic law, the true commencement or foundation-stone, of the constitution. Before it there was no mechanism in our political system, no balance of forces or play of counteracting elements and tendencies; nothing but the sort of life and movement that may belong to a stone or a cannon-ball or any other mere mass. The royal power was all in all. With the Charter, and the death of the last despotic king, from whom it was extorted, begins another order of things both political and social. It may be likened to the passing away

of the night and the dawning of a new day. In particular, the Charter may be said to have consummated by a solemn legislative fiat the blending and incorporation of the two races, the conquerors and the conquered, which had been actively going on without any such sanction, and under the natural influence of circumstances only, throughout the preceding half-century,—having commenced, we may reckon, perhaps, half a century earlier, or about the middle of the reign of Henry I. There is, at least, not a word in this law making the least reference to any distinction between the two races. Both are spoken of throughout only as English; the nation is again recognized as one, as fully as it had been before either William the Norman or Canute the Dane.

We have thus four successive periods of about half a century each:—The first, from the Danish to the Norman Conquest,—half English, half Danish; the Second, from the Norman Conquest to the middle of the reign of Henry I., in which the subjugated English and their French or Norman rulers were completely divided; the Third and Fourth extending to the date of Magna Charta, and presenting, the former the comparatively slow, the latter the accelerated, process of the intermixture and fusion of the two races. Some of our old chroniclers would make the third half-century also, as well as the first and second, to have been inaugurated by a great constitutional or political event: as the year 1016 is memorable for the Danish and the year 1066 for the Norman Conquest, so in 1116, we are told by Stow, "on the 19th day of April, King Henry called a council of all the States of his realm, both of the Prelates, Nobles, and Commons, to Salisbury, there to consult for the good government of the Commonwealth, and the weighty affairs of the same, which council, taking the name and fame of the French, is called a Parliament;" "and this," he adds, "do the historiographers note to be the first Parliament in England, and that the kings before that time were never wont to call any of their Commons or people to council or lawmaking." This theory of the origin of our

parliamentary government must, indeed, be rejected;* but the year 1116 will still remain notable as that in which Henry, reversing what had been done fifty years before, crossed the sea with an army of English to reduce his ancestral Normandy, or prevent it from falling into the hands of the son of his unfortunate elder brother. Even the next stage, half a century further on, when we have supposed the amalgamation of the two races to have assumed its accelerated movement, may be held to be less precisely indicated by such events as the appointment of Becket, said to be the first Englishman since the Conquest promoted to high office either in the Church or the State, to the archbishopric of Canterbury in 1161,—the enactment in 1164 of the Constitutions of Clarendon, by which the clergy, a body essentially foreign in feeling and to a great extent even of foreign birth, were brought somewhat more under subjection to the law of the land—and the Conquest of Ireland in 1172, to the vast exaltation of the English name and power.

What was the history of the vernacular language for this first century and a half after the Norman Conquest, throughout which everything native would thus seem to have been in a course of gradual re-emergence from the general foreign inundation that had overwhelmed the country? We have no historical record or statement as to this matter: the question can only be answered, in so far as it can be answered at all, from an examination of such compositions of the time in the vernacular tongue as may have come down to us.

The principal literature produced in England during this period was in the Latin and French languages. In the former were written most works on subjects of theology, philosophy, and history; in the latter most of those intended rather to amuse than to inform, and addressed, not to students and professional readers, but to the idlers of the court and the upper classes, by whom they were seldom

* See Sir H. Spelman, Concilia; ad an. 1116.

actually read, or much expected to be read, but only listened to as they were recited or chanted (for most of them were in verse) by others. How far over society such a knowledge of the imported tongue came to extend as was requisite for the understanding and enjoyment of what was thus written in it has been matter of dispute. The Abbé de la Rue conceives that a large proportion even of the middle classes, and of the town population generally, must have been so far frenchified; but later authorities look upon this as an extravagant supposition.

It is, at all events, this French literature only that is to be considered as having come into competition with, or to have taken the place of, the old vernacular literature. The employment of the Latin language in writing by monks, secular churchmen, and other persons who had had a learned education, was what had always gone on in England as in every other country of Western Christendom; there was nothing new in that; we continue to have it after the Conquest just as we had it before the Conquest. But it is quite otherwise with the writing of French; that was altogether a new thing in England, and indeed very much of a new thing everywhere, in the eleventh century: no specimen of composition in the Langue d'Oyl, in fact, either in verse or in prose, has come down to us from beyond that century, nor is there reason to believe that it had been much earlier turned to account for literary purposes even in France itself. The great mass of the oldest French literature that has been preserved was produced in England, or, at any rate, in the dominions of the King of England, in the twelfth century.

To whatever portion of society in England an acquaintance with this French literature was confined, it is evident that it was for some time after the Conquest the only literature of the day that, without addressing itself exclusively to the learned classes, still demanded some measure of cultivation in its readers or auditors as well as in its authors.

It was the only popular literature that was not adapted to the mere populace. We might infer this even from the fact that, if any other ever existed, it has mostly perished. The various metrical chronicles, romances, and other compositions in the French tongue, a good many of which are still extant, are very nearly the only literary works which have come down to us from this age. And, while the mass of this produce that has been preserved is, as we have said, very considerable, we have distinct notices of much more which is now lost. How the French language should have acquired the position which it thus appears to have held in England for some time after the Conquest is easily explained. The advantage which it derived from being the language of the court, of the entire body of the nobility, and of the opulent and influential classes generally, is obvious. This not only gave it the prestige and attraction of what we now call fashion, but, in the circumstances to which the country was reduced, would very speedily make it the only language in which any kind of regular or grammatical training could be obtained. With the native population almost everywhere deprived of its natural leaders, the old landed proprietary of its own blood, it cannot be supposed that schools in which the reading and writing of the vernacular tongue was taught could continue to subsist. This has been often pointed out. But what we may call the social cause, or that arising out of the relative conditions of the two races, was probably assisted by another which has not been so much attended to. The languages themselves did not compete upon fair terms. The French would have in the general estimation a decided advantage for the purposes of literature over the English. The latter was held universally to be merely a barbarous form of speech, claiming kindred with nothing except the other half-articulate dialects of the woods, hardly one of which had ever known what it was to have any acquaintance with letters, or was conceived even by those who spoke it to be fit to be used in writing except on the most vulgar oc-

casions, or where anything like either dignity or precision of expression was of no importance; the former, although somewhat soiled and disfigured by ill usage received at the hands of the uneducated multitude, and also only recently much employed in formal or artistic eloquence, could still boast the most honourable of all pedigrees as a daughter of the Latin, and was thus besides allied to the popular speech of every more civilized province of Western Christendom. The very name by which it had been known when it first attracted attention with reference to its literary capabilities was, as we have seen, the Rustic Latin, or Roman (*Lingua Romana Rustica*). Even without being favoured by circumstances, as it was in the present case, a tongue having these intrinsic recommendations would not have been easily worsted, in a contest for the preference as the organ of fashionable literature, by such a competitor as the unknown and unconnected English.

There was only one great advantage possessed by the national tongue with which it was impossible for the other in the long run to cope. This was the fact of its being the national tongue, the speech, actual and ancestral, of the great body of the people. Even that, indeed, might not have enabled it to maintain its ground if it had been a mere unwritten form of speech. But it had been cultivated and trained for centuries both by the practice of composition, in prose as well as in verse, and by the application to it of the art of the grammarian. It already possessed a literature considerable in volume, and embracing a variety of departments. It was not merely something floating upon men's breath, but had a substantial existence in poems and histories, in libraries and parchments. In that state it might cease, in the storm of national calamity, to be generally either written or read, but even its more literary inflexions and constructions would be less likely to fall into complete and universal oblivion. The memory, at least, of its old renown would not altogether die away; and that alone would be found to be much when, after a time, it began to

be again, although in a somewhat altered form, employed in writing.

The nature of the altered form which distinguishes the written vernacular tongue when it reappears after the Norman Conquest from the aspect it presents before that date (or the earliest modern English from what is commonly designated Saxon or Anglo-Saxon) is not matter of dispute. "The substance of the change," to adopt the words of Mr. Price, the late learned editor of Warton, "is admitted on all hands to consist in the suppression of those grammatical intricacies occasioned by the inflection of nouns, the seemingly arbitrary distinctions of gender, the government of prepositions, &c." * It was, in fact, the conversion of an inflectional into a non-inflectional, of a synthetic into an analytic, language. The syntactical connexion of words, and the modification of the mental conceptions which they represent, was indicated, no longer, in general, by those variations which constitute what are called declension and conjugation, but by separate particles, or simply by juxtaposition; and whatever seemed to admit of being neglected without injury to the prime object of expressing the meaning of the speaker, or writer,—no matter what other purposes it might serve of a merely ornamental or artistic nature—was ruthlessly dispensed with.

A change such as this is unquestionably the breaking up of a language. In the first instance, at least, it amounts to the destruction of much that is most characteristic of the language,—of all that constitutes its beauty to the educated mind, imbued with a feeling for the literature into which it has been wrought,—of something, probably, even of its precision as well as of its expressiveness in a higher sense. It has become, in a manner, but the skeleton of what it was, or the skeleton with only the skin hanging loose upon it:—all the covering and rounding flesh gone. Or we may say it is the language no longer with its old natural bearing and suitable attire, but reduced to the rags and squalor of a

* Preface to Warton's Hist. of Eng. Poetry, p. 86.

beggar. Or it may be compared to a material edifice, once bright with many of the attractions of decorative architecture, now stripped of all its splendours and left only a collection of bare and dilapidated walls. It may be, too, that, as is commonly assumed, a synthetic tongue is essentially a nobler and more effective instrument of expression than an analytic one, — that, often comprising a whole sentence, or at least a whole clause, in a word, it presents thoughts and emotions in flashes and pictures where the other can only employ comparatively dead conventional signs. But perhaps the comparison has been too commonly made between the synthetic tongue in its perfection and the analytic one while only in its rudimentary state. The language may be considered to have changed its constitution, somewhat like a country which should have ceased to be a monarchy and become a republic. The new political system could only be fairly compared with the old one, and the balance struck between the advantages of the one and those of the other, after the former should have had time fully to develop itself under the operation of its own peculiar principles. Even if it be inferior upon the whole, and for the highest purposes, an analytic language may perhaps have some recommendations which a synthetic one does not possess. It may not be either more natural or, properly speaking, more simple, for the original constitution of most, if not of all, languages seems to have been synthetic, and a synthetic language is as easy both to acquire and to wield as an analytic one to those to whom it is native; nor can the latter be said to be more rational or philosophical than the former, for, as being in the main natural products, and not artificial contrivances, languages must be held to stand all on an equality in respect of the reasonableness at least of the principle on which they are constituted; but yet, if comparatively defective in poetical expressiveness, analytic languages will probably be found, whenever they have been sufficiently cultivated, to be capable, in pure exposition, of rendering thought with

superior minuteness and distinctness of detail. With their small tenacity or cohesion, they penetrate into every chink and fold, like water or fine dust.

But the great question in every case of the apparent conversion of a synthetic into an analytic language is, how, or under the operation of what cause or causes, the change was brought about. In the particular case before us, for instance, what was it that converted the form of our vernacular tongue which we find alone employed in writing before the Norman Conquest into the comparatively uninflected form in which it appears in the generality of the compositions which have come down to us from the first ages after that great political and social catastrophe?

First, however, we may remark that there is no proof of the latter form having been really new, or of recent origin, about the time of the Conquest. All that we can assert is, that soon after that date it first appears in writing. If it was ever so employed before, no earlier specimens of it have been preserved. It was undoubtedly the form of the language popularly in use at the time when it thus first presents itself in our national literature. But did it not exist as an oral dialect long before? May it not have so existed from the remotest antiquity alongside of the more artificial form which was exclusively, or at least usually, employed in writing? It has been supposed that even the classical Greek and Latin, such as we find in books, may have always been accompanied each by another form of speech, of looser texture, and probably more of an analytical character, which served for the ordinary oral intercourse of the less educated population, and of which it has even been conjectured we may have some much disguised vestige or resemblance in the modern Romaic and Italian. The rise, at any rate, of what was long a merely oral dialect into a language capable of being employed in literature, and of thereby being gradually so trained and improved as to supplant and take the place of the ancient more highly inflected and otherwise more artificial literary language of

the country, is illustrated by what is known to have happened in France and other continental provinces of the old Empire of the West, where the *Romana Rustica*, as it was called, which was a corrupted or broken-down form of the proper Latin, after having been for some centuries only orally used, came to be written as well as spoken, and, having been first taken into the service of the more popular kinds of literature, ended by becoming the language of all literature and the only national speech. So in this country there may possibly have been in use for colloquial purposes a dialect of a similar character to our modern analytic English even from the earliest days of the old synthetic English; and the two forms of the language, the regular and the irregular, the learned and the vulgar, the mother and the daughter, or rather, if you will, the elder and the younger sister, may have subsisted together for many centuries, till there came a crisis which for a time laid the entire fabric of the old national civilization in the dust, when the rude and hardy character of the one carried it through the storm which the more delicate structure of the other could not stand.

Or was the written English of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the same English (or Anglo-Saxon) that was written in the ninth and tenth, only modified by that process of gradual change the principle of which was inherent in the constitution of the language? Was the former neither the sister nor the daughter of the latter, but the latter merely at a different stage of its natural growth? This is the view that has been maintained by some eminent authorities. The late Mr. Price, acknowledging it to be a matter beyond dispute "that some change had taken place in the style of composition and general structure of the language" from the end of the ninth to the end of the twelfth century, adds: —"But that these mutations were a consequence of the Norman invasion, or were even accelerated by that event, is wholly incapable of proof; and nothing is supported upon a firmer principle of rational induction, than that the same

effects would have ensued if William and his followers had remained in their native soil."* The change, as we have seen, may be said to have amounted to the transformation of the language from one of a synthetic to one of an analytic constitution or structure; but Mr. Price contends that, whether it is to be considered as the result of an innate law of the language, or of some general law in the organization of those who spoke it, its having been in no way dependent upon external circumstances,—upon foreign influence or political disturbances,—is established by the undeniable fact that every other language of the Low-German stock displays the same simplification of its grammar. "In all these languages," he observes, "there has been a constant tendency to relieve themselves of that precision which chooses a fresh symbol for every shade of meaning, to lessen the amount of nice distinctions, and detect as it were a royal road to the interchange of opinion. Yet, in thus diminishing their grammatical forms and simplifying their rules, in this common effort to evince a striking contrast to the usual effects of civilization, all confusion has been prevented by the very manner in which the operation has been conducted; for the revolution produced has been so gradual in its progress, that it is only to be discovered on a comparison of the respective languages at periods of a considerable interval."**

The interval that Mr. Price has taken in the present case is certainly wide enough. What has to be explained is the difference that we find between the written English of the middle of the twelfth century and that, not of the age of Alfred, or the end of the ninth century, but rather of the end of the eleventh. The question is, how we are to account for a great change which would appear to have taken place in the language, as employed for literary purposes, not in three centuries, but in one century, or even in half a century. The English of Alfred continues to be in all respects the English of Alfric, who lived and wrote more than a century

* Preface to Warton, 85. ** Ib., 86.

later. The National Chronicle, still written substantially in the old language, comes down even to the year 1154. It is probable that we have here the continued employment, for the sake of uniformity, of an idiom which had now become antique, or what is called dead; but there is certainly no evidence or trace of any other form of the national speech having ever been used in writing before the year 1100 at the earliest. The overthrow of the native government and civilization by the Conquest in the latter part of the eleventh century would not, of course, extinguish the knowledge of the old literary language of the country till after the lapse of about a generation. We may fairly, then, regard the change in question as having taken place, in all probability, not in three centuries, as Mr. Price puts the case, but within at most the third part of that space. This correction, while it brings the breaking up of the language into close connexion in point of time with the social revolution, gives it also much more of a sudden and convulsionary character than it has in Mr. Price's representation. The gradual and gentle flow, assumed to have extended over three centuries, turns out to have been really a rapid precipitous descent—something almost of the nature of a cataract—effected possibly within the sixth or eighth part of that space of time.

It may be that there is a tendency in certain languages, or in all languages, to undergo a similar simplication of their grammar to that which the English underwent at this crisis. And it is conceivable that such a tendency constantly operating unchecked may at last produce such a change as we have in the present case, the conversion of the language from one of a synthetic to one of an analytic structure. That may have happened with those other languages of the Low-Germanic stock to which Mr. Price refers. But such was certainly not the case with the English. We have that language distinctly before us for three or four centuries, during which it is not pretended that there is to be detected a trace of the operation of any such tendency. The tendency, therefore, either did not exist, or

must have been rendered inoperative by some counteracting influence. If, on the other hand, we are to suppose that, in our own or in any other language, the tendency suddenly developed itself or became active at a particular moment, that would necessarily imply the very operation of a new external cause which Mr. Price's theory denies. It is no matter whether we may or may not be able to point out the cause; that a cause there must have been is unquestionable.

In the case before us, the cause is sufficiently obvious. The integrity of the constitution or grammatical system of the language was preserved so long as its literature flourished; when that ceased to be read and studied and produced, the grammatical cultivation and knowledge of the language also ceased. The two things, indeed, were really one and the same. The literature and the literary form of the language could not but live and die together. Whatever killed the one was sure also to blight the other. And what was it that did or could bring the native literature of England suddenly to an end in the eleventh or twelfth century except the new political and social circumstances in which the country was then placed? What other than such a cause ever extinguished in any country the light of its ancient literature.

Of at least two similar cases we have a perfect knowledge. How long did the classical Latin continue to be a living language? Just so long as the fabric of Latin civilization in the Western Empire continued to exist; so long, and no longer. When that was overthrown, the literature which was its product and exponent, its expression and in a manner its very soul, and the highly artificial form of language which was the material in which that literature was wrought, were both at once struck with a mortal disease under which they perished almost with the generation that had witnessed the consummation of the barbaric invasion. Exactly similar is the history of the classic Greek, only that it continued to exist as a living language for a thousand years after the

Latin, the social system with which it was bound up, of which it was part and parcel, lasting so much longer. When that fell, with the fall of the Eastern Empire in the fifteenth century, the language also became extinct. The ancient Greek gave place to the modern Greek, or what is called the Romaic. The conquest of Constantinople by the Turks was, so far, to the Greek language the same thing that the Norman Conquest was to the English.

The Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries.—Ascendancy of the Scholastic Philosophy.

Ever since the appearance of Peter Lombard's Four Books of Sentences, about the middle of the twelfth century, a struggle for ascendancy had been going on throughout Europe between the Scholastic Theology, or new philosophy, and the grammatical and rhetorical studies with which men had previously been chiefly occupied. At first the natural advantages of its position told in favour of the established learning; nay an impulse and a new inspiration were probably given to poetry and the belles-lettres for a time by the competition of logic and philosophy, and the general intellectual excitement thus produced: it was in the latter part of the twelfth century that the writing of Latin verse was cultivated with the greatest success; it was at the very end of that century that Geoffrey de Vinsauf, or de Vino Salvo, composed and published his poem on the restoration of the legitimate mode of versification, under the title of Nova Poetria, or the New Poetry. But from about this date the tide began to turn; and the first half of the thirteenth century may be described as the era of the decline and fall of elegant literature, and the complete reduction of studious minds under the dominion of the scholastic logic and metaphysics.

In the University of Paris, and it was doubtless the same elsewhere, from about the middle of the thirteenth century, the ancient classics seem nearly to have ceased to be read;

and all that was taught of rhetoric, or even of grammar, consisted of a few lessons from Priscian. The habit of speaking Latin correctly and elegantly, which had been so common an accomplishment of the scholars of the last age, was now generally lost: even at the universities, the classic tongue was corrupted into a base jargon, in which frequently all grammar and syntax were disregarded. This universal revolt from the study of words and of æsthetics to that of thoughts and of things is the most remarkable event in the intellectual history of the species. Undoubtedly all its results were not evil. On the whole, it was most probably the salvation even of that learning and elegant literature which it seemed for a time to have overwhelmed. The excitement of its very novelty awakened the minds of men. Never was there such a ferment of intellectual activity as now sprung up in Europe. The enthusiasm of the Crusades seemed to have been succeeded by an enthusiasm of study, which equally impelled its successive inundations of devotees. In the beginning of the fourteenth century there were thirty thousand students at the University of Oxford; and that of Paris could probably boast of the attendance of a still vaster multitude. This was something almost like a universal diffusion of education and knowledge. The brief revival of elegant literature in the twelfth century was a premature spring, which could not last. The preliminary processes of vegetation were not sufficiently advanced to sustain any general or enduring efflorescence; nor was the state of the world such as to call for or admit of any extensive spread of the kind of scholarship then cultivated. The probability is, that, even if nothing else had taken its place, it would have gradually become feebler in character, as well as confined within a narrower circle of cultivators, till it had altogether evaporated and disappeared. The excitement of the new learning, turbulent and in some respects debasing as it was, saved Western Europe from the complete extinction of the light of scholarship and philosophy which would in that

case have ensued, and kept alive the spirit of intellectual culture, though in the mean while imprisoned and limited in its vision, for a happier future time when it should have ampler scope and full freedom of range.

Almost the only studies now cultivated by the common herd of students were the Aristotelian logic and metaphysics. Yet it was not till after a struggle of some length that the supremacy of Aristotle was established in the schools. The most ancient statutes of the University of Paris that have been preserved, those issued by the pope's legate, Robert de Courçon, in 1215, prohibited the reading either of the metaphysical or the physical works of that philosopher, or of any abridgment of them. This, however, it has been remarked, was a mitigation of the treatment these books had met with a few years before, when all the copies of them that could be found were ordered to be thrown into the fire.* Still more lenient was a decree of Pope Gregory IX. in 1231, which only ordered the reading of them to be suspended until they should have undergone correction. Certain heretical notions in religion, promulgated or suspected to have been entertained by some of the most zealous of the early Aristotelians, had awakened the apprehensions of the Church; but the general orthodoxy of their successors quieted these fears; and in course of time the authority of the Stagirite was universally recognized both in theology and in the profane sciences.

Some of the most distinguished of the scholastic doctors of this period were natives of Britain. Such, in particular, were Alexander de Hales, styled the Irrefragable, an English Franciscan, who died at Paris in 1245, and who is famous as the master of St. Bonaventura, and the first of the long list of commentators on the Four Books of the Sentences; the Subtle Doctor, John Duns Scotus, also a Franciscan and the chief glory of that order, who after teaching with unprecedented popularity and applause at Oxford and Paris, died at Cologne in 1308, at the early age

* Crevier, Histoire de l'Univ. de Paris, I. 313.

of forty-three, leaving a mass of writings, the very quantity of which would be sufficiently wonderful, even if they were not marked by a vigour and penetration of thought which, down to our own day, has excited the admiration of all who have examined them; and William Occam, the Invincible, another Franciscan, the pupil of Scotus, but afterwards his opponent on the great philosophical question of the origin and nature of Universals or General Terms, which so long divided, and still divides, logicians. Occam, who died at Munich in 1347, was the restorer, and perhaps the most able defender that the middle ages produced of the doctrine of Nominalism, or the opinion that general notions are merely names, and not real existences, as was contended by the Realists. The side taken by Occam was that of the minority in his own day, and for many ages after, and his views accordingly were generally regarded as heterodox in the schools; but his high merits have been recognized in modern times, when perhaps the greater number of speculators have come over to his way of thinking.

Mathematical and other Studies.

In the mathematical and physical sciences, Roger Bacon is the great name of the thirteenth century, and indeed the greatest that either his country or Europe can produce for some centuries after this time. He was born at Ilchester about the year 1214, and died in 1292. His writings that are still preserved, of which the principal is that entitled his Opus Majus (or Greater Work), show that the range of his investigations included theology, grammar, the ancient languages, geometry, astronomy, chronology, geography, music, optics, mechanics, chemistry, and most of the other branches of experimental philosophy. In all these sciences he had mastered whatever was then known; and his knowledge, though necessarily mixed with much error, extended in various directions considerably farther than, but for the

evidence of his writings, we should have been warranted in believing that scientific researches had been carried in that age. In optics, for instance, he not only understood the general laws of reflected and refracted light, and had at least conceived such an instrument as a telescope, but he makes some advances towards an explanation of the phenomena of the rainbow. It may be doubted whether what have been sometimes called his inventions and discoveries in mechanics and in chemistry were for the greater part more than notions he had formed of the possibility of accomplishing certain results; but, even regarded as mere speculations or conjectures, many of his statements of what might be done show that he was familiar with mechanical principles, and possessed considerable acquaintance with the powers of natural agents. He appears to have been acquainted with the effects and composition of gunpowder, which indeed there is other evidence for believing to have been then known in Europe. Bacon's notions on the right method of philosophizing are remarkably enlightened for the times in which he lived; and his general views upon most subjects evince a penetration and liberality much beyond the spirit of his age. With all his sagacity and freedom from prejudice, indeed, he was a believer both in astrology and alchemy; but, as it has been observed, these delusions did not then stand in the same predicament as now: they were "irrational only because unproved, and neither impossible nor unworthy of the investigation of a philosopher, in the absence of preceding experiments." *

Another eminent English cultivator of mathematical science in that age was the celebrated Robert Grosseteste,

* Penny Cyclopædia, III. 243. Bacon's principal work, the Opus Majus, was published by Dr. Jebb, in a folio volume, at London in 1733; and several of his other treatises had been previously printed at Francfort, Paris, and elsewhere. His Opus Minus has also now been edited by Professor Brewer, of King's College, London, and forms one of the volumes of the series entitled Rerum Britannicarum Medii Ævi Scriptores, or Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages; published by the authority of Her Majesty's Treasury, under the direction of the Master of the Rolls, 8vo. London, 1857, &c.

or Grostête, or Grosthead, bishop of Lincoln, the friend and patron of Bacon. Grostête, who died in 1253, and of whom we shall have more to say presently, is the author of a treatise on the sphere, which had been printed. A third name that deserves to be mentioned along with these is that of Sir Michael Scott, famous in popular tradition as a practitioner of the occult sciences, but whom his writings, of which several are extant, and have been printed, prove to have been possessed of acquirements, both in science and literature, of which few in those times could boast. He is commonly assumed to have been proprietor of the estate of Balwearie, in Fife, and to have survived till near the close of the thirteenth century; but all that is certain is that he was a native of Scotland, and one of the most distinguished of the learned persons who flourished at the court of the Emperor Frederick II., who died in 1250.* Like Roger Bacon, Scott was addicted to the study of alchemy and astrology; but these were in his eyes also parts of natural philosophy. Among other works, a History of Animals is ascribed to him; and he is said to have translated several of the works of Aristotle from the Greek into Latin, at the command of the Emperor Frederick. He is reputed to have been eminently skilled both in astronomy and medicine; and a contemporary, John Bacon, himself known by the title of Prince of the Averroists, or followers of the Arabian doctor Averroes, celebrates him as a great theologian.**

These instances, however, were rare exceptions to the general rule. Metaphysics and logic, together with divinity —which was converted into little else than a subject of metaphysical and logical contention—so occupied the crowd of intellectual inquirers, that, except the professional branches of law and medicine, scarcely any other studies were generally attended to. Roger Bacon himself tells us that he knew of only two good mathematicians among his contemporaries—one John of Leyden, who had been a pupil of his own, and

* See article in Penny Cyclopædia, xxi. 101.
** See an article on Michael Scott in Bayle.

another whom he does not name, but who is supposed to have been John Peckham, a Franciscan friar, who afterwards became archbishop of Canterbury. Few students of the science, he says, proceeded farther than the fifth proposition of the first book of Euclid—the well-known asses' bridge. The study of geometry was still confounded in the popular understanding with the study of magic—a proof that it was a very rare pursuit. In arithmetic, although the Arabic numerals had found their way to Christian Europe before the middle of the fourteenth century, they do not appear to have come into general use till a considerably later date. Astronomy, however, was sufficiently cultivated at the University of Paris to enable some of the members to predict an eclipse of the sun which happened on the 31st of January, 1310.* This science was indebted for part of the attention it received to the belief that was universally entertained in the influence of the stars over human affairs. And, as astrology led to the cultivation and improvement of astronomy, so the other imaginary science of alchemy undoubtedly aided the progress of chemistry and medicine. Besides Roger Bacon and Michael Scott in the thirteenth century, England contributes the names of John Daustein, of Richard, and of Cremer abbot of Westminster, the disciple and friend of the famous Raymond Lully, to the list of the writers on alchemy in the fourteenth. Lully himself visited England in the reign of Edward I., on the invitation of the king; and he affirms in one of his works, that, in the secret chamber of St. Katharine in the Tower of London, he performed in the royal presence the experiment of transmuting some crystal into a mass of diamond, or adamant as he calls it, of which Edward, he says, caused some little pillars to be made for the tabernacle of God. It was popularly believed, indeed, at the time, that the English king had been furnished by Lully with a great quantity of gold for defraying the expense of an expedition he intended to make to the Holy Land. Edward III. was not less credulous on the subject than his grandfather, as appears

* Crevier, II. 224.

by an order which he issued in 1329, in the following terms: —"Know all men, that we have been assured that John of Rous and Master William of Dalby know how to make silver by the art of alchemy; that they have made it in former times, and still continue to make it; and, considering that these men, by their art, and by making the precious metal, may be profitable to us and to our kingdom, we have commanded our well-beloved Thomas Cary to apprehend the aforesaid John and William, wherever they can be found, within liberties or without, and bring them to us, together with all the instruments of their art, under safe and sure custody." The earliest English writer on medicine, whose works have been printed, is Gilbert English (or Anglicus), who flourished in the thirteenth century; and he was followed in the next century by John de Gaddesden. The practice of medicine had now been taken in a great measure out of the hands of the clergy; but the art was still in the greater part a mixture of superstition and quackery, although the knowledge of some useful remedies, and perhaps also of a few principles, had been obtained from the writings of the Arabic physicians (many of which had been translated into Latin) and from the instructions delivered in the schools of Spain and Italy. The distinction between the physician and the apothecary was already well understood. Surgery also began to be followed as a separate branch: some works are still extant, partly printed, partly in manuscript, by John Ardern, or Arden, an eminent English surgeon, who practised at Newark in the fourteenth century. A lively picture of the state of the surgical art at this period is given by a French writer, Guy de Cauliac, in a system of surgery which he published in 1363: "The practitioners in surgery," he says, "are divided into five sects. The first follow Roger and Roland, and the four masters, and apply poultices to all wounds and abscesses; the second follow Brunus and Theodoric, and in the same cases use wine only; the third follow Saliceto and Lanfranc, and treat wounds with ointments and soft plasters; the fourth are chiefly Germans, who attend

the armies, and promiscuously use charms, potions, oil, and wool; the fifth are old women and ignorant people, who have recourse to the saints in all cases."

Yet the true method of philosophising, by experiment and the collection of facts, was almost as distinctly and emphatically laid down in this age by Roger Bacon, as it was more than three centuries afterwards by his illustrious namesake. Much knowledge, too, must necessarily have been accumulated in various departments by the actual application of this method. Some of the greatest of the modern chemists have bestowed the highest praise on the manner in which the experiments of the alchemists, or hermetic philosophers, as they called themselves, on metals and other natural substances appear to have been conducted. In another field—namely, in that of geography, and the institutions, customs, and general state of distant countries—a great deal of new information must have been acquired from the accounts that were now published by various travellers, especially by Marco Polo, who penetrated as far as to Tartary and China, in the latter part of the thirteenth century, and by our countryman, Sir John Mandevil, who also traversed a great part of the East about a hundred years later. Roger Bacon has inserted a very curious epitome of the geographical knowledge of his time in his Opus Majus.

Universities and Colleges.

About the middle of the thirteenth century, both in England and elsewhere, the universities began to assume a new form, by the erection of colleges for the residence of their members as separate communities. The zeal for learning that was displayed in these endowments is the most honourable characteristic of the age. Before the end of the fourteenth century the following colleges were founded at Oxford:—University Hall, by William, archdeacon of Durham,

who died in 1249; Baliol College, by John Baliol, father of King John of Scotland, about 1263; Merton College, by Walter Merton, bishop of Rochester, in 1268; Exeter College, by Walter Stapleton, bishop of Exeter, about 1315; Oriel College, originally called the Hall of the Blessed Virgin of Oxford, by Edward II. and his almoner, Adam de Brom, about 1324; Queen's College, by Robert Eglesfield, chaplain to Queen Philippa, in 1340; and New College, in 1379, by the celebrated William of Wykeham, bishop of Winchester, the munificent founder also of Winchester School or College. In the University of Cambridge the foundations were, Peter House, by Hugh Balsham, sub-prior and afterwards bishop of Ely, about 1256; Michael College (afterwards incorporated with Trinity College), by Herby de Stanton, Chancellor of the Exchequer to Edward II., about 1324; University Hall (soon afterwards burnt down), by Richard Badew, Chancellor of the University, in 1326; King's Hall (afterwards united to Trinity College), by Edward III.; Clare Hall, a restoration of University Hall, by Elizabeth de Clare, Countess of Ulster, about 1347; Pembroke Hall, or the Hall of Valence and Mary, in the same year, by Mary de St. Paul, widow of Aymer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke; Trinity Hall, in 1350, by William Bateman, bishop of Norwich; Gonvil Hall, about the same time, by Edmond Gonvil, parson of Terrington and Rushworth, in Norfolk; and Corpus Christi, or Ben'et (that is, Benedict) College, about 1351, by the United Guilds of Corpus Christi and St. Mary, in the town of Cambridge. The erection of these colleges, besides the accommodations which they afforded in various ways both to teachers and students gave a permanent establishment to the universities, which they scarcely before possessed. The original condition of these celebrated seats of learning, in regard to all the conveniences of teaching, appears to have been humble in the extreme. Great disorders and scandals are also said to have arisen, before the several societies were thus assembled each within its own walls, from the intermixture of the

students with the townspeople, and their exemption from all discipline. But, when the members of the University were counted by tens of thousands, discipline, even in the most favourable circumstances, must have been nearly out of the question. The difficulty would not be lessened by the general character of the persons composing the learned mob, if we may take it from the quaint historian of the University of Oxford. Many of them, Anthony à Wood affirms, were mere "varlets who pretended to be scholars;" he does not scruple to charge them with being habitually guilty of thieving and other enormities; and he adds, "They lived under no discipline, neither had any tutors, but only for fashion sake would sometimes thrust themselves into the schools at ordinary lectures, and, when they went to perform any mischiefs, then would they be accounted scholars, that so they might free themselves from the jurisdiction of the burghers." To repress the evils of this state of things, the old statutes of the University of Paris, in 1215, had ordained that no one should be reputed a scholar who had not a certain master. Another of these ancient regulations may be quoted in illustration of the simplicity of the times, and of the small measure of pomp and circumstance that the heads of the commonwealth of learning could then affect. It is ordered that every master reading lectures in the faculty of arts should have his cloak or gown round, black, and falling as low as the heels—"at least," adds the statute, with amusing *naïveté*, "while it is new." But this famous seminary long continued to take pride in its poverty as one of its most honourable distinctions. There is something very noble and affecting in the terms in which the rector and masters of the faculty of arts are found petitioning, in 1362, for a postponement of the hearing of a cause in which they were parties. "We have difficulty," they say, "in finding the money to pay the procurators and advocates, whom it is necessary for us to employ—*we whose profession it is to possess no wealth.*" * Yet, when funds were wanted for im-

* Crevier, II. 404.

portant purposes in connexion with learning or science, they were supplied in this age with no stinted liberality. We have seen with what alacrity opulent persons came forward to build and endow colleges, as soon as the expediency of such foundations came to be perceived. In almost all these establishments more or less provision was made for the permanent maintenance of a body of poor scholars, in other words, for the admission of even the humblest classes to a share in the benefits of that learned education whose temples and priesthood were thus planted in the land. It is probable, also, that the same kind of liberality was often shown in other ways. Roger Bacon tells us himself that, in the twenty years in which he had been engaged in his experiments, he had spent in books and instruments no less a sum than two thousand French livres, an amount of silver equal to about six thousand pounds of our present money, and in effective value certainly to many times that sum. He must have been indebted for these large supplies to the generosity of rich friends and patrons.

Cultivation and Employment of the Learned Tongues in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries.

Notwithstanding the general neglect of its elegancies, and of the habit of speaking it correctly or grammatically, the Latin tongue sill continued to be in England, as elsewhere, the common language of the learned, and that in which books were generally written that were intended for their perusal. Among this class of works may be included the contemporary chronicles, most of which were compiled in the monasteries, and the authors of almost all of which were churchmen.

Latin was also, for a great part of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the usual language of the law, at least in writing. There may, indeed, be some doubt perhaps as

to the Charter of John. It is usually given in Latin; but there is also a French text first published in the first edition of D'Achery's Spicilegium (1653-57), xii. 573, &c., which there is some reason for believing to be the original. "An attentive critical examination of the French and Latin together," says Mr. Luders, "will induce any person capable of making it to think several chapters of the latter translated from the former, and not originally composed in Latin." * Yet the Capitula, or articles on which the Great Charter is founded, are known to us only in Latin. And all the other charters of liberties are in that language. So is every statute down to the year 1275. The first that is in French is the Statute of Westminster the First, passed in that year, the 3rd of Edward I. Throughout the remainder of the reign of Edward they are sometimes in Latin, sometimes in French, but more frequently in the former language. The French becomes more frequent in the time of Edward II., and is almost exclusively used in that of Eward III. and Richard II. Still there are statutes in Latin in the sixth and eighth years of the last-mentioned king. It is not improbable that, from the accession of Edward I., the practice may have been to draw up every statute in both languages. Of the law treatises, Bracton (about 1265) and Fleta (about 1285) are in Latin; Britton (about 1280) and the Miroir des Justices (about 1320), in French.

Latin was not only the language in which all the scholastic divines and philosophers wrote, but was also employed by all writers on geometry, astronomy, chemistry, medicine, and the other branches of mathematical and natural science. All the works of Roger Bacon, for example, are in Latin; and it is worth noting that, although by no means a writer of classical purity, this distinguished cultivator of science is still one of the most correct writers of his time. He was indeed not a less zealous student of literature than of

* Tracts on the Law and History of England (1810), p. 393. D'Achery's French text may also be read in a more common book, Johnson's History of Magna Charta, 2nd edit. (1772), pp. 182—234.

science, nor less anxious for the improvement of the one than of the other: accustomed himself to read the works of Aristotle in the original Greek, he denounces as mischievous impositions the wretched Latin translations by which alone they were known to the generality of his contemporaries: he warmly recommends the study of grammar and the ancient languages generally; and deplores the little attention paid to the Oriental tongues in particular, of which he says there were not in his time more than three or four persons in Western Europe who knew anything. It is remarkable that the most strenuous effort made within the present period to revive the study of this last-mentioned learning proceeded from another eminent cultivator of natural science, the famous Raymond Lully, half philosopher, half quack, as it has been the fashion to regard him. It was at his instigation that Clement V., in 1311, with the approbation of the Council of Vienne, published a constitution, ordering that professors of Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, and Chaldaic should be established in the universities of Paris, Oxford, Bologna, and Salamanca. He had, more than twenty years before, urged the same measure upon Honorius IV., and its adoption then was only prevented by the death of that pope. After all, it is doubtful if the papal ordinance was ever carried into effect. There were, however, professors of strange, or foreign, languages at Paris a few years after this time, as appears from an epistle of Pope John XXII. to his legate there in 1325, in which the latter is enjoined to keep watch over the said professors, lest they should introduce any dogmas as strange as the languages they taught. *

Many additional details are collected by Warton in his Dissertation on the Introduction of Learning into England. He is inclined to think that many Greek manuscripts found their way into Europe from Constantinople in the time of the Crusades. "Robert Grosthead, bishop of Lincoln," he proceeds, "an universal scholar, and no less conversant in

* Crevier, Hist. de l'Univ. de Paris, II. 112, 227.

polite letters than the most abstruse sciences, cultivated and patronized the study of the Greek language. This illustrious prelate, who is said to have composed almost two hundred books, read lectures in the school of the Franciscan friars at Oxford about the year 1230. He translated Dionysius the Areopagite and Damascenus into Latin. He greatly facilitated the knowledge of Greek by a translation of Suidas's Lexicon, a book in high repute among the lower Greeks, and at that time almost a recent compilation. He promoted John of Basingstoke to the archdeaconry of Leicester, chiefly because he was a Greek scholar, and possessed many Greek manuscripts, which he is said to have brought from Athens into England. He entertained, as a domestic in his palace, Nicholas, chaplain of the abbot of St. Albans, surnamed *Græcus*, from his uncommon proficiency in Greek; and by his assistance he translated from Greek into Latin the testaments of the twelve patriarchs. Grosthead had almost incurred the censure of excommunication for preferring a complaint to the pope that most of the opulent benefices in England were occupied by Italians. But the practice, although notoriously founded on the monopolizing and arbitrary spirit of papal imposition, and a manifest act of injustice to the English clergy, probably contributed to introduce many learned foreigners into England, and to propagate philological literature."* "Bishop Grosthead," Warton adds, "is also said to have been profoundly skilled in the Hebrew language. William the Conqueror permitted great numbers of Jews to come over from Rouen, and to settle in England, about the year 1087. Their multitude soon increased, and they spread themselves in vast bodies throughout most of the cities and capital towns in England, where they built synagogues. There were fifteen hundred at York about the year 1189. At Bury in Suffolk is a very complete remain of a Jewish synagogue of stone, in the Norman style, large and magnificent. Hence it was that many of the learned English ecclesiastics of those times became acquainted with their

* Hist. of Eng. Poet., I. cxxxv.

books and language. In the reign of William Rufus, at Oxford the Jews were remarkably numerous, and had acquired a considerable property; and some of their rabbis were permitted to open a school in the university, where they instructed not only their own people, but many Christian students, in the Hebrew literature, about the year 1054. Within two hundred years after their admission or establishment by the Conqueror, they were banished the kingdom. This circumstance was highly favourable to the circulation of their learning in England. The suddenness of their dismission obliged them, for present subsistence, and other reasons, to sell their moveable goods of all kinds, among which were large quantities of Rabbinical books. The monks in various parts availed themselves of the distribution of these treasures. At Huntingdon and Stamford there was a prodigious sale of their effects, containing immense stores of Hebrew manuscripts, which were immediately purchased by Gregory of Huntingdon, prior of the abbey of Ramsey. Gregory speedily became an adept in the Hebrew, by means of these valuable acquisitions, which he bequeathed to his monastery about the year 1250. Other members of the same convent, in consequence of these advantages, are said to have been equal proficients in the same language, soon after the death of Prior Gregory; among whom were Robert Dodford, librarian of Ramsey, and Laurence Holbeck, who compiled a Hebrew Lexicon. At Oxford, great multitudes of their books fell into the hands of Roger Bacon, or were bought by his brethren, the Franciscan friars of that university."* The general expulsion of the Jews from England did not take place till the year 1290, in the reign of Edward I.; but they had been repeatedly subjected to sudden violence, both from the populace and from the government, before that grand catastrophe.

* Hist. of Eng. Poet., i, cxxxvi.

Last Age of the French Language in England.

The French language, however, was still in common use among us down to the latter part of the reign of Edward III. It is well remarked by Pinkerton that we are to date the cessation of the general use of French in this country from the breaking out of "the inveterate enmity" between the two nations in the reign of that king.* Higden, as we have seen, writing before this change had taken place, tells us that French was still in his day the language which the children of gentlemen were taught to speak from their cradle, and the only language that was allowed to be used by boys at school; the effect of which was, that even the country people generally understood it and affected its use. The tone, however, in which this is stated by Higden indicates that the public feeling had already begun to set in against these customs, and that, if they still kept their ground from use and wont, they had lost their hold upon any firmer or sûrer stay. Accordingly about a quarter of a century or thirty years later his translator Trevisa finds it necessary to subjoin the following explanation or correction:—"This maner was myche yused tofore the first moreyn [before the first murrain or plague, which happened in 1349], and is siththe som dele [somewhat] ychaungide. For John Cornwaile, a maister of gramer, chaungide the lore [learning] in gramer scole and construction of [from] Frensch into Englisch, and Richard Pencriche lerned that maner teching of him, and other men of Pencriche. So that now, the yere of owre Lord a thousand thre hundred foure score and fyve, of the secunde King Rychard after the Conquest nyne, in alle the gramer scoles of England children leveth Frensch, and construeth and lerneth an [in] Englisch, and haveth thereby

* Essay on the Origin of Scotish Poetry, prefixed to Ancient Scotish Poems, 1786, vol. I. p. LXIII. Some curious remarks upon the peculiar political position in which England was held to stand in relation to France in the first reigns after the Conquest may be read in Gale's Preface to his Scriptores Quindecim.

avauntage in oon [one] side and desavauntage in another. Her [their] avauntage is, that thei lerneth her [their] gramer in lasse tyme than children were wont to do; desavauntage is, that now children of gramer scole kunneth [know] no more Frensch than can her lifte [knows their left] heele; and that is harm for hem [them], and [if] thei schul passe the see and travaile in strange londes, and in many other places also. Also gentilmen haveth now mych ylefte for to teche her [their] children Frensch."*

A few years before this, in 1362 (the 36th of Edward III.), was passed the statute ordaining that all pleas pleaded in the king's courts should be pleaded in the English language, and entered and enrolled in Latin; the pleadings, or oral arguments, till now having been in French, and the enrolments of the judgments sometimes in French, sometimes in Latin. The reasons assigned for this change in the preamble of the act are: "Because it is often showed to the king by the prelates, dukes, earls, barons, and all the commonalty, of the great mischiefs which have happened to divers of the realm, because the laws, customs, and statutes of this realm be not commonly holden and kept in the same realm, for that they be pleaded, shewed, and judged in the French tongue, which is much unknown in the said realm, so that the people which do implead, or be impleaded, in the king's court, and in the courts of other, have no knowledge nor understanding of that which is said for them or against them by their sergeants and other pleaders; and that reasonably the said laws and customs the rather shall be perceived and known, and better understood, in the tongue used in the said realm, and by so much every man of the said realm may the better govern himself without offending of the law, and the better keep, save, and defend his heritage and possessions; and in divers regions and countries, where the king, the nobles, and other of the said realm have been, good governance and full right is done to every person, be-

* As quoted by Tyrwhitt, from Harl. MS. 1900, in Essay on the Language, &c., of Chaucer.

cause that their laws and customs be learned and used in the tongue of the country."

Yet, oddly enough, this very statute (of which we have here quoted the old translation) is in French, which, whatever might be the case with the great body of the people, continued down to a considerably later date than this to be the mother-tongue of our Norman royal family, and probably also that generally spoken at court and at least in the upper house of parliament. Ritson asserts that there is no instance in which Henry III. is known to have expressed himself in English. "King Edward I. generally," he continues, "or, according to Andrew of Wyntoun, constantly, spoke the French language, both in the council and in the field, many of his sayings in that idiom being recorded by our old historians. When, in the council at Norham, in 1291-2, Anthony Beck had, as it is said, proved to the king, by reason and eloquence, that Bruce was too dangerous a neighbour to be king of Scotland, his Majesty replied, *Par le sang de dieu*, *vous aves bien eschanté*, and accordingly adjudged the crown to Baliol; of whom, refusing to obey his summons, he afterwards said, *A ce fol felon tel folie fais? S'il ne voult venir à nous*, *nous viendrons à lui.** There is but one instance of his speaking English; which was when the great sultan sent ambassadors, after his assassination, to protest that he had no knowledge of it. These, standing at a distance, adored the king, prone on the ground; and Edward said in English (*in Anglico*), *You*, *indeed*, *adore*, *but you little love*, *me.* Nor understood they his words, because they spoke to him by an interpreter.** King Edward II., likewise, who married a French princess, used himself the French tongue. Sir Henry Spelman had a manuscript, in which was a piece of poetry entitled *De le roi Edward le fiz roi Edward*, *le chanson qu'il fist mesmes*, which Lord Orford was unacquainted with. His son Edward III. always wrote his letters

* For these two speeches, the latter of which, by-the-by, he points as if he did not understand it, Ritson quotes the Scotichronicon (Fordun), II. 147, 156.

** For this anecdote Ritson quotes Hemingford (in Gale), p. 591.

or despatches in French, as we find them preserved by Robert of Avesbury; and in the early part of his reign even the Oxford scholars were confined in conversation to Latin or French.* .... There is a single instance preserved of this monarch's use of the English language. He appeared in 1349 in a tournament at Canterbury with a white swan for his impress, and the following motto embroidered on his shield:—

Hay, hay, the wythe swan!
By Godes soul I am thy man!**

Lewis Beaumont, bishop of Durham, 1317, understood not a word of either Latin or English. In reading the bull of his appointment, which he had been taught to spell for several days before, he stumbled upon the word *metropolitice*, which he in vain endeavoured to pronounce; and, having hammered over it a considerable time, at last cried out, in his mother tongue, *Seit pour dite! Par Seynt Lowys il ne fu pas curteis qui ceste parole ici escrit.**** The first instance of the English language which Mr. Tyrwhitt had discovered in the parliamentary proceedings was the confession of Thomas, Duke of Gloucester, in 1398. He might, however, have met with a petition of the mercers of London ten years earlier (*Rot. Parl.* III. 225). The oldest English instrument produced by Rymer is dated 1368 (VII. 526); but an indenture in the same idiom betwixt the abbot and convent of Whitby, and Robert the son of John Bustard, dated at York in 1343,† is the earliest known."††

* The authority for this last statement is a note in Warton's Hist. of Eng. Poet. I. 6 (edit. of 1824).

** "See Warton's Hist. of Eng. Poet. II. 251 (I. 86, in edit. of 1824). He had another, 'It is as it is;' and may have had a third, 'Ha St. Edward! Ha St. George.'"

*** "Robert de Graystanes, Anglia Sacra, I. 761—'Take it as said! By St. Lewis, he was not very civil who wrote this word here.'"

† "Charlton's History of Whitby, 247."

†† Dissertation on Romance and Minstrelsy, pp. lxxv.-lxxxvi. We have not thought it necessary to preserve Ritson's peculiar spelling, adopted, apparently on no principle except that of deviating from the established usage.

Re-emergence of the English as a Literary Tongue.

French metrical romances and other poetry, accordingly, continued to be written in England, and in many instances by Englishmen, throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Down to the end of the twelfth century verse was probably the only form in which romances, meaning originally any compositions in the Romance or French language, then any narrative compositions whatever, were written: in the thirteenth, a few may have appeared in prose; but before the close of the fourteenth prose had become the usual form in which such works were produced, and many of the old metrical romances had been recast in this new shape. The early French prose romances, however, do not, like their metrical predecessors, belong in any sense to the literature of this country: many of them were no doubt generally read for a time in England as well as in France; but we have no reason for believing that any of them were primarily addressed to the English public, or were written in England or by English subjects, and even during the brief space that they continued popular they seem to have been regarded as foreign importations.

For the last fifty years of the fourteenth century, however, the French language had been rapidly losing the position it had held among us from the middle of the eleventh, and becoming among all classes in England a foreign tongue. To the testimonies above produced of Higden writing immediately before the commencement of this change, and of Trevisa after it had been going on for about a quarter of a century, may be added what Chaucer writes, probably within ten years after the date (1385) which Trevisa expressly notes as that of his statement. In the Prologue to his Testament of Love, a prose work, which seems to have been far advanced, if not finished, in 1392* the great

* See Tyrwhitt's Account of the Works of Chaucer, prefixed to his Glossary.

father of our English poetry, speaking of those of his countrymen who still persisted in writing French verse, expresses himself thus:—"Certes there ben some that speke thyr poysy mater in Frenche, of whyche speche the Frenche men have as good a fantasye as we have in hearing of French mennes Englyshe." And afterwards he adds, "Let, then, clerkes endyten in Latyn, for they have the propertye in science and the knowinge in that facultye, and lette Frenchmen in theyr Frenche also endyte theyr queynt termes, for it is kyndly [natural] to theyr mouthes; and let us shewe our fantasyes in suche wordes as we learneden of our dames tonge." French, it is evident from this, although it might still be a common acquirement among the higher classes, had ceased to be the mother-tongue of any class of Englishmen, and was only known to those to whom it was taught by a master. So, the Prioress in the Canterbury Tales, although she could speak French "ful fayre and fetisly," or neatly, spoke it only

> "After the scole of Stratford atte Bowe,
> For Frenche of Paris was to hire [her] unknowe." *

From this, as from many other passages in old writers, we learn that the French taught and spoken in England had, as was indeed inevitable, become a corrupt dialect of the language, or at least very different from the French at Paris. But, as the foreign tongue lost its hold and declined in purity, the old Teutonic speech of the native population, favoured by the same circumstances and course of events

* It is impossible to believe with Sir Harris Nicolas, in his otherwise very clear and judicious Life of Chaucer (8vo. Lond. 1843; additional note, p. 142), that Chaucer perhaps here meant to intimate that the prioress could not speak French at all, on the ground that the expression "French of Stratford-at-Bow" is used in a tract published in 1586 (Ferne's Blazon of Gentrie), to describe the language of English heraldry. In the first place the phrase is not there "a colloquial paraphrase for *English*," but for the mixed French and English, or, as it might be regarded, Anglicized or corrupted French, of our heralds. But, at any rate, can it be supposed for a moment that Chaucer would take so roundabout and fantastic a way as this of telling his readers so simple a fact, as that his prioress could speak her native tongue? He would never have spent three words upon such a matter, much less three lines.

which checked and depressed its rival, and having at last, after going through a process almost of dissolution and putrefaction, begun to assume a new organization, gradually recovered its ascendancy.

We have already examined the first revolution which the language underwent, and endeavoured to explain the manner in which it was brought about. It consisted in the disintegration of the grammatical system of the language, and the conversion of it from an inflectional and synthetic into a comparatively noninflected and analytic language. The vocabulary, or what we may call the substance of the language, was not changed; that remained still purely Gothic, as it always had been; only the old form or structure was broken up or obliterated. There was no mixture or infusion of any foreign element; the language was as it were decomposed, but was not adulterated, and the process of decomposition may be regarded as having been mainly the work of the eleventh century, and as having been begun by the Danish Conquest and consummated by the Norman.

This first revolution which the language underwent is to be carefully distinguished from the second, which was brought about by the combination of the native with a foreign element, and consisted essentially in the change made in the vocabulary of the language by the introduction of numerous terms borrowed from the French. Of this latter innovation we find little trace till long after the completion of the former. For nearly two centuries after the Conquest the English seems to have been spoken and written (to the small extent to which it was written) with scarcely any intermixture of Norman. It only, in fact, began to receive such intermixture after it came to be adopted as the speech of that part of the nation which had previously spoken French. And this adoption was plainly the cause of the intermixture. So long as it remained the language only of those who had been accustomed to speak it from their infancy, and who had never known any other, it might have gradually become changed in its internal organization, but it could scarcely

acquire any additions from a foreign source. What should have tempted the Saxon peasant to substitute a Norman term, upon any occasion, for the word of the same meaning with which the language of his ancestors supplied him? As for things and occasions for which new names were necessary, they must have come comparatively little in his way; and, when they did, the capabilities of his native tongue were sufficient to furnish him with appropriate forms of expression from its own resources. The corruption of the English by the intermixture of French vocables must have proceeded from those whose original language was French, and who were in habits of constant intercourse with French customs, French literature, and everything else that was French, at the same time that they, occasionally at least, spoke English. And this supposition is in perfect accordance with the historical fact. So long as the English was the language of only a part of the nation, and the French, as it were, struggled with it for mastery, it remained unadulterated;—when it became the speech of the whole people, of the higher classes as well as of the lower, then it lost its old Teutonic purity, and received a larger alien admixture from the alien lips through which it passed. Whether this was a fortunate circumstance, or the reverse, is another question. It may just be remarked, however, that the English, if it had been left to its own spontaneous and unassisted development, would probably have assumed a character resembling rather that of the Dutch or the Flemish than that of the German of the present day.

The commencement of this second revolution, which changed the very substance of the language, may most probably be dated from about the middle of the thirteenth century, or about a century and a half after the completion of the first, which affected, not the substance or vocabulary of the language, but only its form or grammatical system.

SECOND ENGLISH:—
COMMONLY CALLED *SEMI-SAXON.*

The chief remains that we have of English verse for the first two centuries after the Conquest have been enumerated by Sir Frederic Madden in a comprehensive paragraph of his valuable Introduction to the romance of Havelock, which we will take leave to transcribe:—"The notices by which we are enabled to trace the rise of our Saxon poetry from the Saxon period to the end of the twelfth century are few and scanty. We may, indeed, comprise them all in the Song of Canute recorded by the monk of Ely [Hist. Elyens. p. 505 apud Gale], who wrote about 1166; the words put into the mouth of Aldred archbishop of York, who died in 1069 [W. Malmesb. de Gest. Pontif. l. i. p. 271]; the verses ascribed to St. Godric, the hermit of Finchale, who died in 1170 [Rits. Bibliogr. Poet.]; the few lines preserved by Lambarde and Camden attributed to the same period [Rits. Anc. Songs, Diss. p. XXVIII.]; and the prophecy said to have been set up at Here in the year 1189, as recorded by Benedict Abbas, Roger Hoveden, and the Chronicle of Lanercost [Rits. Metr. Rom. Diss. p. LXXIII.]. To the same reign of Henry II. are to be assigned the metrical compositions of Layamon [MS. Cott. Cal. A. IX., and Otho C. XIII.] and Orm [MS. Jun. 1], and also the legends of St. Katherine, St. Margaret, and St. Julian [MS. Bodl. 34], with some few others, from which we may learn with tolerable accuracy the state of the language at that time, and its gradual formation from the Saxon to the shape it subsequently assumed. From this period to the middle of the next century nothing occurs to which we can affix any certain date; but we shall probably not err in ascribing to that interval the poems ascribed to John de Guldevorde [MSS. Cott. Cal. A. IX., Jes. Coll. Oxon. 29], the Biblical History [MS. Bennet Cant. R. 11] and Poetical Paraphrase of the Psalms [MSS. Cott. Vesp. D. VII., Coll. Benn. Cant. O. 6, Bodl. 921]

quoted by Warton, and the Moral Ode published by Hickes [MSS. Digby 4, Jes. Coll. Oxon. 29]. Between the years 1244 and 1258, we know, was written the versification of part of a meditation of St. Augustine, as proved by the age of the prior who gave the the MS. to the Durham Library [MS. Eccl. Dun. A. III. 12, and Bodl. 42]. Soon after this time also were composed the earlier Songs in Ritson and Percy (1264), with a few more pieces which it is unnecessary to particularize. This will bring us to the close of Henry III.'s reign and beginning of his successor's, the period assigned by our poetical antiquaries to the romances of Sir Tristrem, Kyng Horn, and Kyng Alesaunder."*

The verse that has been preserved of the song composed by Canute as he was one day rowing on the Nen, while the holy music came floating on the air and along the water from the choir of the neighbouring minster of Ely—a song which we are told by the historian continued to his day, after the lapse of a century and a half, to be a universal popular favourite**—is very nearly such English as was written in the fourteenth century. This interesting fragment properly falls to be given as the first of our specimens:—

Merie sungen the muneches binnen Ely
Tha Cnut Ching rew there by:
Roweth, cnihtes, noer the lant,
And here we thes muneches saeng.

That is, literally,—

Merry (sweetly) sung the monks within Ely
That (when) Cnute King rowed thereby:
Row, knights, near the land,
And hear we these monks' song.

Being in verse and in rhyme, it is probable that the words are reported in their original form; they cannot, at any rate, be much altered.

The not very clerical address of Archbishop Aldred to

* The Ancient English Romance of Havelok the Dane: Introduction, p. xlix. We have transferred the references, inclosed in brackets, from the bottom of the page to the text.

** Quæ usque hodie in choris publice cantantur, et in proverbiis memorantur.

Ursus Earl of Worcester, who refused to take down one of his castles the ditch of which encroached upon a monastic churchyard, consists, as reported by William of Malmesbury (who by-the-by praises its elegance) of only two short lines:—

Hatest thou* Urse?
Have thou God's curse.

The hymn of St. Godric has more of an antique character. It is thus given by Ritson, who professes to have collated the Royal MS. 5 F. VII., and the Harleian MS. 322, and refers also to Matt. Parisiensis Historia, pp. 119, 120, edit. 1640, and to (MS. Cott.) Nero D. v.:—

Sainte Marie [clane] virgine,
Moder Jhesu Cristes Nazarene,
On fo [*or* fong], schild, help thin Godric,
On fang bring hegilich with the in Godes riche.
Sainte Marie, Christe's bur,
Maidens clenhad, moderes flur,
Dilie min sinne [*or* sennen], rix in min mod,
Bring me to winne with the selfd God.

"By the assistance of the Latin versions," adds Ritson, "one is enabled to give it literally in English, as follows:—Saint Mary [chaste] virgin, mother of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, take, shield, help thy Godric; take, bring him quickly with thee into God's kingdom. Saint Mary, Christ's chamber, purity of a maiden, flower of a mother, destroy my sin, reign in my mind, bring me to dwell with the only God."

Two other short compositions of the same poetical eremite are much in the same style. One is a couplet said to have been sung to him by the spirit or ghost of his sister, who appeared to him after her death and thus assured him of her happiness:—

Crist and Sainte Marie swa on scamel me iledde
That ic on this erde ne silde with mine bare fote itredde.

Which Ritson translates:—"Christ and Mary, thus supported,

* That is, Hightest thou (art thou called)? Malmesbury's Latin translation is, "Vocaris Ursus: habeas Dei maledictionem." But the first line seems to be interrogative.

have me brought, that I on earth should not with my bare foot tread."

The other is a hymn to St. Nicholas:—

Sainte Nicholaes, Godes druth,
Tymbre us faire scone hus.
At thi burth, at thi bare.
Sainte Nicholaes, bring us wel there.

"That is," says Ritson, "Saint Nicholas, God's lover, build us a fair beautiful house. At thy birth, at thy bier, Saint Nicholas, bring us safely thither."

As for the rhymes given by Lambarde and Camden as of the twelfth century, they can hardly in the shape in which we have them be of anything like that antiquity: they are, in fact, in the common English of the sixteenth century, Lambarde (in his Dictionary of England, p. 36) tells us that a rabble of Flemings and Normans brought over in 1173 by Robert Earl of Leicester, when they were assembled on a heath near St. Edmonds Bury, "fell to dance and sing,

Hoppe Wylikin, hoppe Wyllykin,
Ingland is thyne and myne, &c."

Camden's story is that Hugh Bigott, Earl of Norfolk, in the reign of Stephen used to boast of the impregnable strength of his castle of Bungey after this fashion:—

"Were I in my castle of Bungey,
Upon the river of Waveney,
I would ne care for the king of Cockeney."

What Sir Frederick Madden describes as "the prophecy said to have been set up at Here in the year 1189" is given by Ritson as follows:—

Whan thu sees in Here hert yreret,
Than sulen Engles in three be ydelet:
That an into Vrland al to late waie,
That other into Puille mid prude bileve,
The thridde into Airhahen herd all wreken drechegen.

These lines, which he calls a "specimen of English poetry, apparently of the same age" (the latter part of the 12th century), Ritson says are preserved by Benedictus Abbas, by Hoveden, and by the Chronicle of Lanercost; and he

professes to give them, and the account by which they are introduced, from "the former," by which he means the first of the three. But in truth the verses do not occur as he has printed them in any of the places to which he refers. And there is no ground for supposing, that they were ever inscribed or set up upon any house at "Here" or elsewhere. What is said both by Benedict and Hoveden (who employ nearly the same words) is simply that the figure of a hart was set upon the pinnacle of the house, in order, as was believed, that the prophecy contained in the verses might be accomplished—which prophecy, we are told immediately before, had been found engraven in ancient characters upon stone tables in the neighbourhood of the place. It is clearly intended to be stated that the prophecy was much older than the building of the house, and the erection of the figure of a stag, in the year 1190.

The Brut of Layamon.

Layamon, or, as he is also called, Laweman—for the old character represented in this instance by our modern *y* is really only a guttural (and by no means either a *j* or a *z*, by which it is sometimes rendered)—tells us himself that he was a priest, and that he resided at Ernley, near Radstone, or Redstone, which appears to have been what is now called Arley Regis, or Lower Arley, on the western bank of the Severn, in Worcestershire. He seems to say that he was employed in the services of the church at that place:—"ther he bock radde" (there he book read). And the only additional information that he gives us respecting himself is, that his father's name was Leovenath (or Leuca, as it is given in the later of the two texts).

His Brut, or Chronicle of Britain (from the arrival of Brutus to the death of King Cadwalader in A.D. 689), is in the main, though with many additions, a translation of the

French Brut d'Angleterre of the Anglo-Norman poet Wace, which is itself a translation, also with considerable additions from other sources, of Geoffrey of Monmouth's Latin Historia Britonum, which again professes, and probably with truth, to be translated from a Welsh or Breton original. So that the genealogy of the four versions or forms of the narrative is:—first, a Celtic original, believed to be now lost; secondly, the Latin of Geoffrey of Monmouth; thirdly, the French of Wace; fourthly, the English of Layamon. The Celtic or British version is of unknown date; the Latin is of the earlier, the French of the latter, half of the twelfth century; and that of Layamon would appear to have been completed in the first years of the thirteenth. We shall encounter a second English translation from Wace's French before the middle of the fourteenth.

The existence of Layamon's Chronicle had long been known, but it had attracted very little attention till comparatively recent times. It is merely mentioned even by Warton and Tyrwhitt—the latter only remarking (in his Essay on the Language and Versification of Chaucer), that, "though the greatest part of this work of Layamon resembles the old Saxon poetry, without rhyme or metre, yet he often intermixes a number of short verses of unequal lengths, but rhyming together pretty exactly, and in some places he has imitated not unsuccessfully the regular octosyllabic measure of his French original." George Ellis, in his Specimens of the Early English Poets, originally published in 1790, was, we believe, the first to introduce Layamon to the general reader, by giving an extract of considerable length, with explanatory annotations, from what he described as his "very curious work," which, he added, never had been, and probably never would be, printed. Subsequently another considerable specimen, in every way much more carefully and learnedly edited, and accompanied with a literal translation throughout into the modern idiom, was presented by Mr. Guest in his History of English Rhythms, 1838 (II. 113-123). But now the whole work has

been edited by Sir Frederic Madden, for the Society of Antiquaries of London, in three volumes 8vo. 1847. This splendid publication, besides a Literal Translation, Notes, and a Grammatical Glossary, contains the Brut in two texts, separated from each other by an interval apparently of about half a century, and, whether regarded in reference to the philological, to say nothing of the historical, value and importance of Layamon's work, or to the admirable and altogether satisfactory manner in which the old chronicle is exhibited and illustrated, may fairly be characterized as by far the most acceptable present that has been made to the students of early English literature in our day.

His editor conceives that we may safely assume Layamon's English to be that of North Worcestershire, the district in which he lived and wrote. But this western dialect, he contends, was also that of the southern part of the island, having in fact originated to the south of the Thames, whence, he says, it gradually extended itself "as far as the courses of the Severn, the Wye, the Tame, and the Avon, and more or less pervaded the counties of Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Herefordshire, Warwickshire, and Oxfordshire,"—besides prevailing "throughout the channel counties from east to west,"—notwithstanding that several of the counties that have been named, and that of Worcester especially, had belonged especially to the non-Saxon kingdom of Mercia. "The language of Layamon," he farther holds, "belongs to that transition period in which the ground-work of Anglo-Saxon phraseology and grammar still existed, although gradually yielding to the influence of the popular forms of speech. We find in it, as in the later portion of the Saxon Chronicle, marked indications of a tendency to adopt those terminations and sounds which characterise a language in a state of change, and which are apparent also in some other branches of the Teutonic tongue." As showing "the progress made in the course of two centuries in departing from the ancient and purer grammatical forms, as found in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts,"

he mentions "the use of *a* as an article;—the change of the Anglo-Saxon terminations *a* and *an* into *e* and *en*, as well as the disregard of inflexions and genders;—the masculine forms given to neuter nouns in the plural;—the neglect of the feminine terminations of adjectives and pronouns, and confusion between the definite and indefinite declensions; the introduction of the preposition *to* before infinitives, and occasional use of weak preterites of verbs and participles instead of strong;—the constant occurrence of *en* for *on* in the plurals of verbs, and frequent elision of the final *e*;—together with the uncertainty in the rule for the government of prepositions." In the earlier text one of the most striking peculiarities is what has been termed the *nunnation*, defined by Sir Frederic as "consisting of the addition of a final *n* to certain cases of nouns and adjectives, to some tenses of verbs, and to several other parts of speech." The western dialect, of which both texts, and especially the earlier, exhibit strong marks, is further described as perceptible in the "termination of the present tense plural in *th*, and infinitives in *i*, *ie*, or *y*; the forms of the plural personal pronouns, *heo*, *heore*, *heom;* the frequent occurrence of the prefix *i* before past participles; the use of *v* for *f*; and prevalence of the vowel *u* for *i* or *y*, in such words as *dude*, *hudde*, *hulle*, *putte*, *hure*, &c." "But," it is added, "on comparing the two texts carefully together, some remarkable variations are apparent in the later, which seem to arise, not from its having been composed at a more recent period, but from the infusion of an Anglian or Northern element into the dialect." From these indications the learned editor is disposed to think that the later text "may have been composed or transcribed in one of the counties conterminous to the Anglian border, and he suggests that "perhaps we might fix on the eastern side of Leicestershire as the locality."

One thing in the English of Layamon that is eminently deserving of notice with reference to the history of the language is the very small amount of the French or Latin

element that is found in it. "The fact itself," Sir F. Madden observes, "of a translation of Wace's poem by a priest of one of the midland counties is sufficient evidence how widely the knowledge of the writings of the *trouvères* was dispersed, and it would appear a natural consequence, that not only the outward form of the Anglo-Norman versification, but also that many of the terms used in the original would be borrowed. This, however, is but true in a very trifling degree, compared with the extent of the work; for, if we number the words derived from the French (even including some that may have come directly from the Latin), we do not find in the earlier text of Layamon's poem so many as fifty, several of which were in usage, as appears by the Saxon Chronicle, previous to the middle of the twelfth century. Of this number the later text retains about thirty, and adds to them rather more than forty which are not found in the earlier version; so that, if we reckon ninety words of French origin in both texts, containing together more than 56,800 lines, we shall be able to form a tolerably correct estimate how little the English language was really affected by foreign converse, even as late as the middle of the thirteenth century."*

Layamon's poem extends to nearly 32,250 lines, or more than double the length of Wace's Brut. This may indicate the amount of the additions which the English chronicler has made to his French original. That, however, is only one, though the chief, of several preceding works to which he professes himself to have been indebted. His own account is:—

He nom tha Englisca boc
Tha makede Seint Beda;
An other he nom on Latin,
Tha makede Seinte Albin,
And the feire Austin,
The fulluht broute hider in.
Boc he nom the thridde,
Leide ther amidden,
Tha makede a Frenchis clerc,

* Preface xxiii.

Wace was ihoten,
The wel conthe writen,
And he hoe yef thare aethelen
Aelienor, the wes Henries quene,
Thes heyes kinges.
Layamon leide theos boc,
And tha leaf wende.
He heom leofliche bi-heold
Lithe him beo Drihten.
Fetheren he nom mid fingren,
And fiede on boc-felle,
And tha sothe word
Sette to-gathere.
And tha thre boc
Thrumde to ane.

That is, literally:—

He took the English book
That Saint Bede made;
Another he took in Latin,
That Saint Albin made,
And the fair Austin,
That baptism brought hither in.
The third book he took,
[And] laid there in midst,
That made a French clerk,
Wace was [he] called,
That well could write,
And he it gave to the noble
Eleanor, that was Henry's queen,
The high king's.
Layamon laid [before him] these books
And the leaves turned.
He them lovingly beheld:
Merciful to him be [the] Lord.
Feather (pen) he took with fingers,
And wrote on book-skin,
And the true words
Set together,
And the three books
Compressed into one.

His English book was no doubt the translation into the vernacular tongue, commonly attributed to King Alfred, of Bede's Ecclesiastical History, which Layamon does not seem to have known to have been originally written in Latin. What he says about his Latin book is unintelligible. St. Austin died in A.D. 604; and the only Albin of whom anything is known was Albin abbot of St. Austin's at Canterbury, who is mentioned by Bede as one of the persons to whom he was indebted for assistance in the compilation of

his History; but he lived more than a century after St. Austin (or Augustine). Some Latin chronicle, however, Layamon evidently had; and his scholarship, therefore, extended to an acquaintance with two other tongues in addition to the now obsolete classic form of his own.

The principal, and indeed almost the only, passage in Layamon's poem from which any inference can be drawn as to the precise time when it was written, is one near the end (p. 31, 979-80) in which, speaking of the tax called Romefeoh, Rome-scot, or Peter-pence, he seems to express a doubt whether it will much longer continue to be paid—

> Drihte wat hu longe
> Theo lagen scullen ilaeste
> (The Lord knows how long
> The law shall last).

This his learned editor conceives to allude to a resistance which it appears was made to the collection of the tax by King John and the nobility in the year 1205; and that supposition, he further suggests, may be held to be fortified by the manner in which Queen Eleanor, who had retired to Aquitaine on the accession of John, and died abroad at an advanced age in 1204, is spoken of in the passage quoted above from what we may call the Preface, written, no doubt, after the work was finished—"Aelienor, the *wes* Henries quene."

"The structure of Layamon's poem," Sir Frederic observes, "consists partly of lines in which the alliterative system of the Anglo-Saxons is preserved, and partly of couplets of unequal length rhiming together. Many couplets, indeed, occur which have both of these forms, whilst others are often met with which possess neither. The latter, therefore, must have depended wholly on accentuation, or have been corrupted in transcription. The relative proportion of each of these forms is not to be ascertained without extreme difficulty, since the author uses them everywhere intermixed and slides from alliteration to rhime, or from rhime to alliteration, in a manner perfectly arbitrary. The

alliterative portion, however, predominates on the whole greatly over the lines rhiming together, even including the imperfect or assonant terminations, which are very frequent." Mr. Guest, Sir Frederic notes, has shown by the specimen which he has given with the accents marked in his English Rhythms (II. 114-124), "that the rhiming couplets of Layamon are founded on the models of accentuated Anglo-Saxon rhythms of four, five, six, or seven accents."

Layamon's poetical merit, and also his value as an original authority, are rated rather high by his editor. His additions to and amplifications of Wace, we are told, consist in the earlier part of the work "principally of the speeches placed in the mouths of different personages, which are often given with quite a dramatic effect." "The text of Wace," it is added, "is enlarged throughout, and in many passages to such an extent, particularly after the birth of Arthur, that one line is dilated into twenty; names of persons and localities are constantly supplied, and not unfrequently interpolations occur of entirely new matter, to the extent of more than an hundred lines. Layamon often embellishes and improves on his copy; and the meagre narrative of the French poet is heightened by graphic touches and details, which give him a just claim to be considered, not as a mere translator, but as an original writer."

The Ormulum.

Another metrical work of considerable extent, that known as the Ormulum, from Orm, or Ormin, which appears to have been the name of the writer, has been usually assigned to the same, or nearly the same age with the Brut of Layamon. It exists only in a single manuscript, which there is some reason for believing to be the author's autograph, now preserved in the Bodleian Library among the books bequeathed by the great scholar Francis Junius, who appears to have purchased it at the Hague in 1659 at the sale of the

books of his deceased friend Janus Ulitius, or Vlitius (van Vliet), also an eminent philologist and book-collector. It is a folio volume, consisting of 90 parchment leaves, besides 29 others inserted, upon which the poetry is written in double columns, in a stiff but distinct hand, and without division into verses, so that the work had always been assumed to be in prose till its metrical character was pointed out by Tyrwhitt in his edition of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, 1775. Accordingly no mention is made of it by Warton, the first volume of whose History was published in 1774. But it had previously been referred to by Hickes and others; and it has attracted a large share of the attention of all recent investigators of the history of the language. It has now been printed in full, under the title of The Ormulum; Now first edited from the Original Manuscript in the Bodleian, with Notes and a glossary, by Robert Meadows White, D.D., late Fellow of St. Mary Magdalene College, and formerly Professor of Anglo-Saxon in the University of Oxford; 2 vols. 8vo. Oxford, at the University Press, 1852.

The Ormulum is described by Dr. White as being "a series of Homilies, in an imperfect state, composed in metre without alliteration, and, except in very few cases, also without rhyme; the subject of the Homilies being supplied by those portions of the New Testament which were read in the daily service of the Church." The plan of the writer is, we are further told, "first to give a paraphrastic version of the Gospel of the day, adapting the matter to the rules of his verse, with such verbal additions as were required for that purpose. He then adds an exposition of the subject in its doctrinal and practical bearings, in the treatment of which he borrows copiously from the writings of St. Augustine and Ælfric, and occasionally from those of Beda." "Some idea," it is added, "may be formed of the extent of Ormin's labours when we consider that, out of the entire series of Homilies, provided for nearly the whole of the yearly service, nothing is left beyond the text of the thirty-second." We have still nearly ten thousand long lines of the work, or nearly twenty

thousand as Dr. White prints them, with the fifteen syllables divided into two sections, the one of eight the other of seven syllables,—the latter, which terminates in an unaccented syllable, being prosodically equivalent to one of six, so that the whole is simply our still common alternation of the eight-syllabled and the six-syllabled line, only without either rhyme or even alliteration, which makes it as pure a species of blank verse, though a different species, as that which is now in use.

The list of the texts, or subjects of the Homilies, as preserved in the manuscript, extends to 242, and it appears to be imperfect. Ormin plainly claims to have completed his long self-imposed task. Here is the beginning of the Dedication to his brother Walter, which stands at the head of the work:—

Nu, brotherr Wallterr, brotherr min
[Now, brother Walter, brother mine]
Affterr the flaeshes kinde;
[After the flesh's kind (or nature)]
Annd brotherr min i Crisstenndom
[And brother mine in Christendom (or Christ's kingdom)]
Thurrh fulluhht and thurrh trowwthe;
[Through baptism and through truth]
Annd brotherr min i Godess hus,
[And brother mine in God's house]
Yet o the thride wise,
[Yet on (in) the third wise]
Thurrh thatt witt hafenn takenn ba
[Though that we two have taken both]
An reghellboc to folghenn,
[One rule-book to follow]
Unnderr kanunnkess had and lif,
[Under canonic's (canon's) rank and life]
Swa summ Sannt Awwstin sette;
[So as St. Austin set (or ruled)]
Icc hafe don swa summ thu badd
[I have done so as thou bade]
Annd forthedd te thin wille:
[And performed thee thine will (wish)]
Icc hafe wennd inntill Ennglissh
[I have wended (turned) into English]
Goddspelless hallghe lare,
[Gospel's holy lore]
Affterr that little witt tatt me
[After that little wit that me]
Min Drihhtin hafeththn lenedd.
[My Lord hath lent]

One remarkable feature in this English is evidently something very peculiar in the spelling. And the same system is observed throughout the work. It is found on a slight examination to consist in the duplication of the consonant whenever it follows a vowel having any other than the sound which is now for the most part indicated by the annexation of a silent *e* to the single consonant, or what may be called the *name* sound, being that by which the vowel is commonly named or spoken of in our modern English. Thus *pane* would by Ormin be written *pan*, but *pan pann; mean men*, but *men menn; pine pin*, but *pin pinn; own on*, but *on onn; tune, tun*, but *tun tunn*. This, as Mr. Guest has pointed out, is, after all, only a rigorous carrying out of a principle which has always been applied to a certain extent in English orthography,—as in *tally*, or *tall*, *berry*, *witty*, *folly*, *dull*, as compared with *tale*, *beer*, *white*, *white*, *lone*, *mule*. The effect, however, in Ormin's work is on a hasty inspection to make his English seem much more rude and antique than it really is. The entry of the MS. in the catalogue of Vliet's library, as quoted by Dr. White, describes it as an old Swedish or Gothic book. Other early notices speak of it as semi-Saxon, or half Danish, or possibly old Scottish. Even Hickes appears to have regarded it as belonging to the first age after the Conquest.

Ormin attaches the highest importance to his peculiar system of orthography. Nevertheless, in quoting what he says upon the subject in a subsequent passage of his Dedication we will take the liberty, for the sake of giving a clear and just idea of his language to a reader of the present day, to strip it of a disguise which so greatly exaggerates its apparent antiquity:—

> And whase willen shall this book
> [And whoso shall wish this book]
> Eft other sithe writen,
> [After (wards) (an) other time (to) write]
> Him bidde icc that he't write right,
> [Him bid I that he it write right]
> Swa sum this book him teacheth,
> [So as this book him teacheth]

All thwert out after that it is
[All athwart (or through) out after that (or what) it is]
Upo this firste bisne.
[Upon this first example]
With all suilk rime als here is set
[With all such rhyme as here is set]
With all se fele wordes
[With all so many words]
And tat he looke well that he
[And that he look well that he]
An bookstaff write twies
[A letter write twice]
Eywhere there it upo this book
[Wherever there (or where) it upon this book]
Is written o that wise.
[Is written on (or in) that wise]
Looke he well that he't write sway
[Look he well that he it write so]
For he ne may nought elles
[For he may not else]
On English writen right te word.
[On (or in) English write right the word]
That wite he well to soothe.
[That wot (or know) he well to (or for) sooth (or truth)]

Thus presented, Ormin's English certainly seems to differ much less from that of the present day than Layamon's. His vocabulary may have as little in it of any foreign admixture; but it appears to contain many fewer words that have now become obsolete; and both his grammar and his construction have much more of a modern character and air.

On the whole, it may be assumed that, while we have a dialect founded on that of the Saxons specially so called in Layamon, we have a specially Anglian form of the national language in the Ormulum; and perhaps that distinction will be enough, without supposing any considerable difference of date, to explain the linguistic differences between the two. There is good reason for believing that the Anglian part of the country shook off the shackles of the old inflectional system sooner than the Saxon, and that our modern comparatively uninflected and analytic English was at least in its earliest stage more the product of Anglian than of purely Saxon influences, and is to be held as having grown up rather in the northern and north-eastern parts of the country than in the southern or south-western.

The Ancren Riwle.

There is also to be mentioned, along with the Brut of Layamon and the Ormulum, a work of considerable extent in prose which has been assigned to the same interesting period in the history of the language, the Ancren Riwle, that is, the Anchorites', or rather Anchoresses', Rule, being a treatise on the duties of the monastic life, written evidently by an ecclesiastic, and probably one in a position of eminence and authority, for the direction of three ladies to whom it is addressed, and who, with their domestic servants or lay sisters, appear to have formed the entire community of a religious house situated at Tarente (otherwise called Tarrant-Kaines, Kaineston, or Kingston) in Dorsetshire. This work too has now been printed, having been edited for the Camden Society in 1853 by the Rev. James Morton, B.D. It is preserved in four manuscripts, three of them in the Cottonian Collection, the other belonging to Corpus Christi College, Cambridge; and there is also in the Library of Magdalen College, Oxford, a Latin text of the greater part of it. The entire work extends to eight Parts, or Books, which in the printed edition cover 215 quarto pages. Mr. Morton, who has appended to an apparently careful representation of the ancient text both a glossary and a version in the language of the present day, has clearly shown, in opposition to the commonly received opinion, that the work was originally written in English, and that the Latin in so far as it goes is only a translation. This, indeed, might have been inferred as most probable in such a case, on the mere ground that we have here a clergyman, however learned, drawing up a manual of practical religious instruction for readers of the other sex, even without the special proofs which Mr. Morton has brought forward. The conclusion to which he states himself to have come, after carefully examining the text which he prints, and comparing it with the Oxford MS., is, that the Latin is "a translation, in many parts

abridged and in some enlarged, made at a comparatively recent period, when the language in which the whole had been originally written was becoming obsolete." In many instances, in fact, the Latin translator has misunderstood his original. Mr. Morton has also thrown great doubts upon the common belief that the authorship of the work is to be ascribed to a certain Simon de Gandavo, or Simon de Ghent, who died Bishop of Salisbury in 1315. This belief rests solely on the authority of an anonymous note prefixed to the Latin version of the work preserved in Magdalen College, Oxford; and Mr. Morton conceives that Simon is of much too late a date. It might have been thought that the fact of the work having been written in English would of itself be conclusive against his claim; but the Bishop of Salisbury, it seems, was born in London or Westminster; it was only his father who was a native of Flanders. On the whole, Mr. Morton is inclined to substitute in place of Bishop Simon a Richard Poor, who was successively Bishop of Chichester, of Salisbury, and of Durham, and who was a native of Tarente, where also, it seems, he died in 1237. Of this prelate Matthew Paris speaks in very high terms of commendation.

Two other mistakes in the old accounts are also disposed of:—that the three recluses to whom the work is addressed belonged to the monastic order of St. James, and that they were the sisters of the writer. He merely directs them, if any ignorant person should ask them of what order they were, to say that they were of the order of St. James, who in his canonical epistle has declared that pure religion consists in visiting and relieving the widow and the orphan, and in keeping ourselves unspotted from the world; and in addressing them as his dear sisters, "he only," as Mr. Morton explains, "uses the form of speech commonly adopted in convents, where nuns are usually spoken of as sisters or mothers, and monks as brothers or fathers."

Upon what is the most important question relating to the work, regarded as a documentary monument belonging to

the history of the language, the learned editor has scarcely succeeded in throwing so much light. Of the age of the manuscripts, or the character of the handwriting, not a word is said. It does not even appear whether any one of the copies can be supposed to be of the antiquity assumed for the work upon either the new or the old theory of its authorship. The question is left to rest entirely upon the language, which, it is remarked, is evidently that of the first quarter of the thirteenth century, not greatly differing from that of Layamon, which has been clearly shown by Sir F. Madden to have been written not later than 1205.

The English of the Ancren Rule is, indeed, rude enough for the highest antiquity that can be demanded for it. "The spelling," Mr. Morton observes, "whether from carelessness or want of system, is of an uncommon and unsettled character, and may be pronounced barbarous and uncouth." The inflections which originally marked the oblique cases of substantive nouns, and also the distinctions of gender, are, it is added, for the most part discarded.

In one particular, however, the English of the Rule differs remarkably from Layamon's. In that, as we have seen, Sir F. Madden found in above 32,000 verses of the older text only about 50 words of French derivation, and only about 90 in all in the 57,000 of both texts; whereas in the present work the infusion of Norman words is described as large. But this, as Mr. Morton suggests, is "owing probably to the peculiar subjects treated of in it, which are theological and moral, in speaking of which terms derived from the Latin would readily occur to the mind of a learned ecclesiastic much conversant with that language, and with the works on similar subjects written in it."

A few sentences from the Eighth or last Part, which treats of domestic matters, will afford a sufficient specimen of this curious work:—

Ye ne schulen eten vleschs ne seim buten ine muchele secnesse; other hwoso is euer feble eteth potage blitheliche; and wunieth ou to lutel drunch. Notheleas, leoue sustren, ower mete and ower drunch haueth ithuht me lesse

then ich wolde. Ne ueste ye nenne dei to bread and to watere, bute ye habben leaue. Sum ancre maketh hire bord mid hire gistes withuten. Thet is to muche ureondschipe, uor, of alle ordres theonne is hit unkuindelukest and mest ayean ancre ordre, thet is al dead to the worlde. Me haueth i-herd ofte siggen thet deade men speken mid cwike men; auh thet heo eten mid cwike men ne uond ich neuer yete. Ne makie ye none gistninges; ne ne tulle ye to the yete non unkuthe harloz; thauh ther nere non other vuel of [hit?] bute hore methlease muth, hit wolde other hwule letten heouendliche thonhtes.

[That is, literally:—Ye not shall eat flesh nor lard but in much sickness; or whoso is ever feeble may eat potage blithely; and accustom yourselves to little drink. Nevertheless, dear sisters, your meat and your drink have seemed to me less than I would (have it). Fast ye not no day to bread and to water but ye have leave. Some anchoresses make their board (or meals) with their friends without. That is too much friendship, for, of all orders, then is it most unnatural and most against anchoress order, that is all dead to the world. One has heard oft say that dead men speak with quick (living) men; but that they eat with quick men not found I never yet. Make not ye no banquetings, nor allure ye not to the gate no strange vagabonds; though there were not none other evil of it but their measureless mouth (or talk), it would (or might) other while (sometimes) hinder heavenly thoughts.]

Early English Metrical Romances.

From the thirteenth century also we are probably to date the origin or earliest composition of English metrical romances; at least, none have descended to the present day which seem to have a claim to any higher antiquity. There is no absolutely conclusive evidence that all our old metrical romances are translations from the French; the French original cannot in every case be produced; but it is at least extremely doubtful if any such work was ever composed in English except upon the foundation of a similar French work. It is no objection that the subjects of most of these poems are not French or continental, but British—that the

stories of some of them are purely English or Saxon: this, as has been shown, was the case with the early northern French poetry generally, from whatever cause, whether simply in consequence of the connection of Normandy with this country from the time of the Conquest, or partly from the earlier intercourse of the Normans with their neighbours the people of Armorica, or Bretagne, whose legends and traditions, which were common to them with their kindred the Welsh, have unquestionably served as the fountain-head to the most copious of all the streams of romantic fiction. French seems to have been the only language of popular literature (apart from mere songs and ballads) in England for some ages after the Conquest; if even a native legend, therefore, was to be turned into a romance, it was in French that the poem would at that period be written. It is possible, indeed, that some legends might have escaped the French trouveurs, to be discovered and taken up at a later date by the English minstrels; but this is not likely to have happened with any that were at all popular or generally known; and of this description, it is believed, are all those, without any exception, upon which our existing early English metrical romances are founded. The subjects of these compositions—Tristrem, King Horn, Havelok, &c.—could hardly have been missed by the French poets in the long period during which they had the whole field to themselves: we have the most conclusive evidence with regard to some of the legends in question that they were well known at an early date to the writers in that language;—the story of Havelok, for instance, is in Gaimar's Chronicle;—upon this general consideration alone, therefore, which is at least not contradicted by either the internal or historical evidence in any particular case, it seems reasonable to infer that, where we have both an English and a French metrical romance upon the same subject, the French is the earlier of the two, and the original of the other. From this it is, in the circumstances, scarcely a step to the conclusion come to by Tyrwhitt, who has intimated his belief "that we have no English

romance prior to the age of Chaucer which is not a translation or imitation of some earlier French romance." * Certainly, if this judgment has not been absolutely demonstrated, it has not been refuted, by the more extended investigation the question has since received.

The history of the English metrical romance appears shortly to be, that at least the first examples of it were translations from the French;—that there is no evidence of any such having been produced before the close of the twelfth century;—that in the thirteenth century were composed the earliest of those we now possess in their original form;—that in the fourteenth the English took the place of the French metrical romance with all classes, and that this was the era alike of its highest ascendancy and of its most abundant and felicitous production:—that in the fifteenth it was supplanted by another species of poetry among the more educated classes, and had also to contend with another rival in the prose romance, but that, nevertheless, it still continued to be produced, although in less quantity and of an inferior fabric,—mostly, indeed, if not exclusively, by the mere modernization of older compositions—for the use of the common people;—and that it did not altogether cease to be read and written till after the commencement of the sixteenth. From that time the taste for this earliest form of our poetical literature (at least counting from the Norman Conquest) lay asleep in the national heart till it was reawakened in our own day by Scott, after the lapse of three hundred years. But the metrical romance was then become quite another sort of thing than it had been in its proper era, throughout the whole extent of which, while the story was generally laid in a past age, the manners and state of society described were, notwithstanding, in most respects those of the poet's and of his readers' or hearers' own time. This was strictly the case with the poems of this description which were produced in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries; and even in those which were accom-

* Essay on the Language of Chaucer, note 55.

modated to the popular taste of a later day much more than the language had to be partially modernized to preserve them in favour. When this could no longer be done without too much violence to the composition, or an entire destruction of its original character, the metrical romance lost its hold of the public mind, and was allowed to drop into oblivion. There had been very little of mere antiquarianism in the interest it had inspired for three centuries. It had pleased principally as a picture or reflection of manners, usages, and a general spirit of society still existing, or supposed to exist. And this is perhaps the condition upon which any poetry must ever expect to be extensively and permanently popular. We need not say that the temporary success of the metrical romance, as revived by Scott, was in great part owing to his appeal to quite a different, almost an opposite, state of feeling.

Metrical Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester.

Nearly what Biography is to History are the metrical romances to the versified Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester, a narrative of British and English affairs from the time of Brutus to the end of the reign of Henry III., which, from events to which it alludes, must have been written after 1297.* All that is known of the author is that he was a monk of the abbey of Gloucester. His Chronicle was printed —"faithfully, I dare say," says Tyrwhitt, "but from incorrect manuscripts"—by Hearne, in 2 vols. 8vo., at Oxford, in 1724; and a re-impression of this edition was produced at London in 1810. The work in the earlier part of it may be considered a free translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's Latin History; but it is altogether a very rude and lifeless composition. "This rhyming chronicle," says Warton, "is totally destitute of art or imagination. The author has

* This has been shown by Sir F. Madden in his Introduction to Havelok the Dane, p. LII.

clothed the fables of Geoffrey of Monmouth in rhyme, which have often a more poetical air in Geoffrey's prose." Tyrwhitt refers to Robert of Gloucester in proof of the fact that the English language had already acquired a strong tincture of French; Warton observes that the language of this writer is full of Saxonisms, and not more easy or intelligible than that of what he calls "the Norman Saxon poems" of Kyng Horn and others which he believes to belong to the preceding century.

Robert of Gloucester's Chronicle, as printed, is in long lines of fourteen syllables, which, however, are generally divisible into two of eight and six, and were perhaps intended to be so written and read. The language appears to be marked by the peculiarities of West Country English. Ample specimens are given by Warton and Ellis; we shall not encumber our limited space with extracts which are recommended by no attraction either in the matter or manner. We will only transcribe, as a sample of the language at the commencement of the reign of Edward I., and for the sake of the curious evidence it supplies in confirmation of a fact to which we have more than once had occasion to draw attention, the short passage about the prevalence of the French tongue in England down even to this date, more than two centuries after the conquest:—

"Thus come lo! Engelonde into Normannes honde,
And the Normans ne couthe speke tho bote her owe speche,
And speke French as dude atom, and here chyldren dude al so teche,
So that heymen of thys loud, that of her blod come,
Holdeth alle thulke speche that hii of hem nome.
Vor bote a man couthe French, me tolth of hym well lute:
Ac lowe men holdeth to Englyss and to her kunde speche yute.
Ich wene ther be ne man in world contreyes none
That ne holdeth to her kunde speche, but Engelond one.
Ac wel me wot vor to conne bothe wel yt ys,
Vor the more that a man con the more worth he ys."

That is, literally:—Thus lo! England came into the hand of the Normans: and the Normans could not speak then but their own speech, and spoke French as they did at home, and their children did all so teach; so that high men of this land, that of their blood come, retain all the same speech

that they of them took. For, unless a man know French, one talketh of him little. But low men hold to English, and to their natural speech yet. I imagine there be no people in any country of the world that do not hold to their natural speech, but in England alone. But well I wot it is well for to know both; for the more that a man knows, the more worth he is.

A short composition of Robert Gloucester's on the Martyrdom of Thomas à Beket was printed by the Percy Society in 1845.

Robert Mannyng, or De Brunne.

Along with this chronicle may be mentioned the similar performance of Robert Mannyng, otherwise called Robert de Brunne (from his birthplace,* Brunne, or Bourne, near Deping, or Market Deeping, in Lincolnshire), belonging as it does to a date not quite half a century later. The work of Robert de Brunne is in two parts, both translated from the French: the first, coming down to the death of Cadwalader, from Wace's Brut; the second, extending to the death of Edward I., from the French or Romance chronicle written by Piers, or Peter, de Langtoft, a canon regular of St. Austin, at Bridlington, in Yorkshire, who wrote various works in French, and who appears to have lived at the same time with De Brunne. Langtoft, whose chronicle, though it has not been printed, is preserved in more than one manuscript, begins with Brutus; but De Brunne, for sufficient reasons it is probable, preferred Wace for the earlier portion of the story, and only took to his own countryman and contemporary when deserted by his older Norman guide. It is the latter part of his work, however, which, owing to the subject, has been thought most valuable or interesting in modern times; it has been printed by Hearne,

* See a valuable note on De Brunne in Sir Frederic Madden's Haveloc. Introduction, p. xiii.

under the title of Peter Langtoft's Chronicle (as illustrated and improved by Robert of Brunne), from the death of Cadwalader to the end of K. Edward the First's reign; transcribed, and now first published, from a MS. in the Inner Temple Library, 2 vols. 8vo. Oxford, 1725; [reprinted London, 1810.) This part, like the original French of Langtoft, is in Alexandrine verse of twelve syllables; the earlier part, which remains in manuscript, is in the same octosyllabic verse in which its original, Wace's chronicle, is written. The work is stated in a Latin note at the end of the MS. to have been finished in 1338. Ritson (Bibliographia Poetica, p. 33) is very wroth with Warton for describing De Brunne as having "scarcely more poetry than Robert of Gloucester;"—"which only proves," Ritson says, "his want of taste or judgment." It may be admitted that De Brunne's chronicle exhibits the language in a considerably more advanced state than that of Gloucester, and also that he appears to have more natural fluency than his predecessor; his work also possesses greater interest from his occasionally speaking in his own person, and from his more frequent expansion and improvement of his French original by new matter; but for poetry, it would probably require a "taste or judgment" equal to Ritson's own to detect much of it.

Lawrence Minot.

Putting aside the authors of some of the best of the early metrical romances, whose names are generally or universally unknown, perhaps the earliest writer of English verse subsequent to the Conquest who deserves the name of a poet is Lawrence Minot, who lived and wrote about the middle of the fourteenth century, and of the reign of Edward III. His ten poems in celebration of the battles and victories of that king, preserved in the Cotton MS. Galba E. ix., which the old catalogue had described as a manuscript of Chaucer, the compiler having been misled by the

name of some former proprietor, Richard Chawfer, inscribed on the volume, were discovered by Tyrwhitt while collecting materials for his edition of the Canterbury Tales, in a note to the Essay on the Language and Versification of Chaucer prefixed to which work their existence was first mentioned. This was in 1775. In 1781 some specimens of them were given (out of their chronological place) by Warton in the third volume of his History of Poetry. Finally, in 1796, the whole were published by Ritson under the title of Poems written anno MCCCLII., by Lawrence Minot; with Introductory Dissertations on the Scottish Wars of Edward III., on his claim to the throne of France, and Notes and Glossary, 8vo. London; and a reprint of this volume appeared in 1825. Of the 250 pages, or thereby, of which it consists, only about 50 are occupied by the poems, which are ten in number, their subjects being the Battle of Halidon Hill (fought 1333); the Battle of Bannockburn (1314), or rather the manner in which that defeat, sustained by his father, had been avenged by Edward III.; Edward's first Invasion of France (1339); the Sea-fight in the Swine, or Zwin* (1340); the siege of Tournay (the same year); the Landing of the English King at La Hogue, on his Expedition in 1346; the Siege of Calais (the same year); the Battle of Neville's Cross (the same year); the Sea-fight with the Spaniards off Winchelsea (1350); and the Taking of the Guisnes (1352). It is from this last date that Ritson, somewhat unwarrantably, assumes that all the poems were written in that year. As they are very various in their form and manner, it is more probable that they were produced as the occasions of them arose, and therefore that they ought rather to be assigned to the interval between 1333 and 1352. They are remarkable, if not for any poetical qualities of a high order, yet for a precision and selectness, as well as a force, of expression, previously, so far as is known, unexampled in English verse. There is a true martial tone and spirit too in them, which reminds us of the best of our old heroic ballads, while it is

* To the south of the Isle of Cadsand, at the mouth of the West Scheldt.

better sustained, and accompanied with more refinement of style, than it usually is in these popular and anonymous compositions. As a sample we will transcribe the one on Edward's first expedition to France, omitting a prologue, which is in a different measure, and modernizing the spelling where it does not affect the rhyme or rhythm:—

Edward, owre comely king,
In Brabànd has his woning[1]
With many comely knight;
And in that land, truely to tell,
Ordains he still for to dwell
To time[2] he think to fight.

Now God, that is of mightés mast,[3]
Grant him grace of the Holy Ghast
His heritage to win;
And Mary Moder, of mercy free,
Save our king and his meny[4]
Fro sorrow, shame, and sin.

Thus in Brabànd has he been,
Where he before was seldom seen
For to prove their japes;[5]
Now no langer will he spare,
Bot unto France fast will he fare
To comfort him with grapes.

Furth he fared into France;
God save him fro mischance,
And all his company!
The noble Duke of Brabànd
With him went into that land,
Ready to live or die.

Then the rich flower de lice[6]
Wan there full little price;
Fast he fled for feared:
The right heir of that countree
Is comen,[7] with all his knightes free,
To shake him by the beard.

Sir Philip the Valays[8]
Wit his men in tho days
To battle had he thought:[9]
He bade his men them purvey
Withouten langer delay;
But he ne held it nought.

[1] Dwelling. [2] Till the time. [3] Most of might.
[4] Followers. [5] Jeers. [6] Fleur de lis.
[7] Come. [8] Philip VI. de Valois, king of France.
[9] The meaning seems to be, "informed his men in those days that he had a design to fight." Unless, indeed, *wit* be a mistranscription of *with*.

He brought folk full great won,[1]
Aye seven agains[2] one,
That full well weaponed were,
Bot soon when he heard ascry[3]
That king Edward was near thereby,
Then durst he nought come near.

In that morning fell a mist,
And when our Englishmen it wist,
It changed all their cheer;
Our king unto God made his boon,[4]
And God sent him good comfort soon;
The weader wex full clear.

Our king and his men held the field
Stalworthly with spear and shield,
And thought to win his right;
With lordes and with knightes keen,
And other doughty men bydeen[5]
That war full frek[6] to fight.

When Sir Philip of France heard tell
That king Edward in field wald[7] dwell,
Then gained him no glee:[8]
He traisted of no better boot,[9]
Bot both on horse and on foot
He hasted him to flee.

It seemed he was feared for strokes
When he did fell his greate oaks
Obout[10] his pavilioun;
Abated was then all his pride,
For langer there durst he nought bide;
His boast was brought all down.

The king of Beme[11] had cares cold,
That was full hardy and bold
A steed to umstride:[12]
He and the king als[13] of Naverne[14]
War fair feared[15] in the fern
Their hevids[16] for to hide.

[1] Number. [2] Against. [3] Report.
[4] Prayer, request.—*Rits.* Perhaps, rather, vow or *bond.*
[5] Perhaps "besides" The word is of common occurrence, but of doubtful or various meaning. [6] Were full eager. [7] Would (was dwelling).
[8] The meaning seems to be, "then no glee, or joy, was given him" (*accessit ei*). [9] He trusted in no better expedient, or alternative.
[10] About. [11] Bohemia. [12] Bestride. [13] Also.
[14] Navarre. [15] Were fairly frightened. [16] Heads.

And leves [1] well it is no lie,
And field hat [2] Flemangry [3]
That king Edward was in,
With princes that were stiff and bold,
And dukes that were doughty told [4]
In battle to begin.

The princes, that were rich on raw, [5]
Gert [6] nakers [7] strike, and trumpes blaw,
And made mirth at their might,
Both alblast [8] and many a bow
War ready railed [9] upon a row,
And full frek for to fight.

Gladly they gave meat and drink,
So that they suld the better swink, [10]
The wight [11] men that there were.
Sir Philip of France fled for doubt,
And hied him hame with all his rout:
Coward! God Give him care!

For there then had the lily flower
Lorn all halely [12] his honoùr,
That so gat fled [13] for feard;
Bot our king Edward come full still [14]
When that he trowed no harm him till, [15]
And keeped him in the beard. [16]

Alliterative Verse.—Piers Ploughman.

It may be observed that Minot's verses are thickly sprinkled with what is called *alliteration*, or the repetition of words having the same commencing letter, either immediately after one another, or with the intervention only of one or two other words generally unemphatic or of subordinate importance. Alliteration, which we find here combined with rhyme, was in an earlier stage of our poetry employed, more systematically, as the substitute for that decoration—the recurrence, at certain regular intervals, of like beginnings, serving the same purpose which is now

1 Believe. 2 Was called. 3 The village of La Flamengrie.
4 Reckoned. 5 Apparently, "arranged richly clad in a row."
6 Caused. 7 Tymbals. 8 Arblast, or crossbow.
9 Placed. 10 Should the better labour.
11 Stout. 12 Lost wholly. 13 Got put to flight?
14 Came back quietly at his ease.
15 When he perceived there was no harm intended him.
16 Perhaps, "kept his beard untouched."

accomplished by what Milton has contemptuously called "the jingling sound of like endings." To the English of the period before the Conquest, until its very latest stage, rhyme was unknown, and down to the tenth century our verse appears to have known no other ornament except that of alliteration. Hence, naturally, even after we had borrowed the practice of rhyme from the French or Romance writers, our poetry retained for a time more or less of its original habit. In Layamon, as we have seen, alliterative and rhyming couplets are intermixed; in other cases, as in Minot, we have the rhyme only pretty liberally bespangled with alliteration. At this date, in fact, the difficulty probably would have been to avoid alliteration in writing verse; all the old customary phraseologies of poetry had been moulded upon that principle; and indeed alliterative expression has in every age, and in many other languages as well as our own, had a charm for the popular ear, so that it has always largely prevailed in proverbs and other such traditional forms of words, nor is it yet by any means altogether discarded as an occasional embellishment of composition, whether in verse or in prose. But there is one poetical work of the fourteenth century, of considerable extent, and in some respects of remarkable merit, in which the verse is without rhyme, and the system of alliteration is almost as regular as what we have in the poetry of the times before the Conquest. This is the famous Vision of Piers Ploughman, or, as the subject is expressed at full length in the Latin title, Visio Willielmi de Petro Ploughman, that is, The Vision of William concerning Piers or Peter Ploughman. The manuscripts of this poem, which long continued to enjoy a high popularity, are very numerous, and it has also been repeatedly printed: first in 1550, at London, by Robert Crowley, "dwelling in Elye rentes in Holburne," who appears to have produced three successive impressions of it in the same year; again in 1561, by Owen Rogers, "dwellyng neare unto great Saint Bartelmewes gate, at the sygne of the Spred Egle;" next in 1813, under the superintendence

of the late Thomas Dunham Whitaker, LL.D.; lastly, in 1842, under the care of Thomas Wright, Esq., M.A., F.R.S., &c.

Of the author of Piers Ploughman scarcely anything is known. He has commonly been called Robert Langland: but there are grounds for believing that his Christian name was William, and it is probable that it is himself of whom he speaks under that name throughout his work. He is supposed to have been a monk, and he seems to have resided in the West of England, near the Malvern Hills, where he introduces himself at the commencement of his poem as falling asleep "on a May morwenynge," and entering upon his dreams or visions. The date may be pretty nearly fixed. In one place there is an allusion to the treaty of Bretigny made with France in 1360, and to the military disasters of the previous year which led to it; in another passage mention is made of a remarkable tempest which occurred on the 15th of January, 1362, as of a recent event. "It is probable," to quote Mr. Wright, "that the poem of Piers Ploughman was composed in the latter part of this year, when the effects of the great wind were fresh in people's memory, and when the treaty of Bretigny had become a subject of popular discontent."* We may assume, at least, that it was in hand at this time.

We shall not attempt an analysis of the work. It consists, in Mr. Wright's edition, where the long line of the other editions is divided into two, of 14,696 verses, distributed into twenty sections, or *Passus* as they are called. Each *passus* forms, or professes to form, a separate vision; and so inartificial or confused is the connection of the several parts of the composition (notwithstanding Dr. Whitaker's notion that it had in his edition "for the first time been shown that it was written after a regular and consistent plan"), that it may be regarded as being in reality not so much one poem as a succession of poems. The general subject may be said to be the same with that of Bunyan's

* Introduction, p. xii.

Pilgrim's Progress, the exposition of the impediments and temptations which beset the crusade of this our mortal life; and the method, too, like Bunyan's, is the allegorical; but the spirit of the poetry is not so much picturesque, or even descriptive, as satirical. Vices and abuses of all sorts come in for their share of the exposure and invective; but the main attack throughout is directed against the corruptions of the church, and the hypocrisy and worldliness, the ignorance, indolence, and sensuality, of the ecclesiastical order. To this favourite theme the author constantly returns with new affection and sharper zest from any less high matter which he may occasionally take up. Hence it has been commonly assumed that he must have himself belonged to the ecclesiastical profession, that he was probably a priest or monk. And his Vision has been regarded not only as mainly a religious poem, but as almost a puritanical and Protestant work, although produced nearly two centuries before either Protestantism or Puritanism was ever heard of. In this notion, as we have seen, it was brought into such repute at the time of the Reformation that three editions of it were printed in one year. There is nothing, however, of anti-Romanism, properly so called, in Langland, either doctrinal or constitutional; and even the anti-clerical spirit of his poetry is not more decided than what is found in the writings of Chaucer, and the other popular literature of the time. In all ages, indeed, it is the tendency of popular literature to erect itself into a power adverse to that of the priesthood, as has been evinced more especially by the poetical literature of modern Europe from the days of the Provençal troubadours. In the Canterbury Tales, however, and in most other works where this spirit appears, the puritanism (if so it is to be called) is merely one of the forms of the poetry; in Piers Ploughman the poetry is principally a form or expression of the puritanism.

The rhythm or measure of the verse in this poem must be considered as accentual rather than syllabical—that is to say, it depends rather upon the number of the accents than

of the syllables. This is, perhaps, the original principle of all verse; and it still remains the leading principle in various kinds of verse, both in our own and in other languages. At first, probably, only the accented syllables were counted, or reckoned of any rhythmical value; other syllables upon which there was no emphasis went for nothing, and might be introduced in any part of the verse, one, two, or three at a time, as the poet chose. Of course it would at all times be felt that there were limits beyond which this licence could not be carried without destroying or injuring the metrical character of the composition; but these limits would not at first be fixed as they now for the most part are. The elementary form of the verse in Piers Ploughman demands a succession of four accented syllables—two in the first hemistich or short line, and two in the second; but, while each of those in the first line is usually preceded by either one or two unaccented syllables, commonly only one of those in the second line is so preceded. The second line, therefore, is for the most part shorter than the first. And they also differ in regard to the alliteration: it being required that in the first both the accented or emphatic syllables, which are generally initial syllables, should begin with the same letter, but that in the second only the first accented syllable should begin with that letter. This is the general rule; but, either from the text being corrupt or from the irregularity of the composition, the exceptions are very numerous.

The poem begins as follows:—

In a summer season,
When soft was the sun,
I shoop me into shrowds[1]
As I a sheep[2] were;
In habit as an hermit
Unholy of werkes,[3]
Went wide in this world
Wonders to hear;

[1] I put myself into clothes. [2] A shepherd.

[3] Whitaker's interpretation is, "in habit, not like an anchorite who keeps his cell, but like one of those unholy hermits who wander about the world to see and hear wonders." He reads, "That went forth in the worl," &c.

Ac[1] on a May morwening
On Malvern hills
Me befel a ferly,[2]
Of fairy me thought.
I was weary for-wandered,[3]
And went me to rest
Under a brood[4] bank,
By a burn's[5] side;
And as I lay and leaned,
And looked on the waters,
I slombered into a sleeping,
It swayed so mury.[6]
Then gan I meten[7]
A marvellous sweven,[8]
That I was in a wilderness,
Wist I never where;
And, as I beheld into the east
On high to the sun,
I seigh[9] a tower on a toft[10]
Frieliche ymaked,[11]
A deep dale beneath,
A donjon therein,
With deep ditches and darke,
And dreadful of sight.
A fair field full of folk
Found I there between,
Of all manner of men.
The mean and the rich,
Werking[12] and wandering
As the world asketh.
Some putten hem[13] to the plough,
Playden full seld,[14]
In setting and sowing
Swonken[15] full hard,
And wonnen that wasters
With gluttony destroyeth.[16]
And some putten hem to pride,
Apparelled hem thereafter,
In countenance of clothing
Comen deguised,[17]
In prayers and penances
Putten hem many,[18]
All for the love of our Lord
Liveden full strait,[19]
In hope to have after
Heaven-riche bliss;[20]

1 And. 2 Wonder. 3 Worn out with wandering.
4 Broad. 5 Stream's. 6 It sounded so pleasant.
7 Meet. 8 Dream. 9 Saw.
10 An elevated ground. 11 Handsomely built. 12 Working.
13 Put them. 14 Played full seldom.
15 Laboured. 16 Wan that which wasters with gluttony destroy.
17 Came disguised. Whitaker reads, "In countenance and in clothing."
18 Many put them, applied themselves to, engaged in.
19 Lived full strictly. 20 The bliss of the kingdom of heaven.

As anchors and heremites[1]
That holden hem in hir[2] cells,
And coveten nought in country
To carryen about,
For no likerous liflode
Hir likame to please.[3]
And some chosen chaffer;[4]
They cheveden[5] the better,
As it seemeth to our sight
That swich me thriveth.[6]
And some murths to make
As minstralles con,[7]
And geten gold with hir glee,[8]
Guiltless, I lieve.[9]
Ac japers and jaugellers[10]
Judas' children,
Feignen hem fantasies
And fools hem maketh,
And han hir[11] wit at will
To werken if they wold.
That Poul preacheth of hem
I wol nat preve[12] it here:
But *qui loquitur turpiloquium*[13]
Is Jupiter's hine.[14]
Bidders[15] and beggars
Fast about yede,[16]
With hir bellies and hir bags
Of bread fully-crammed,
Faiteden[17] for hir food,
Foughten at the ale:
In gluttony, God wot,
Go they to bed,
And risen with ribaudry,[18]
Tho Roberd's knaves;[19]
Sleep and sorry slewth[20]
Sueth[21] hem ever.
Pilgrims and palmers
Plighten hem togider[22]
For to seeken Saint Jame
And saintes at Rome:

[1] Anchorites and eremites or hermits. [2] Hold them in their.
[3] By no likerous living their body to please. [4] Merchandise.
[5] Achieved their end. [6] That such men thrive.
[7] And some are skilled to make mirths, or amusements, as minstrels.
[8] And get gold with their minstrelsy. [9] Believe.
[10] But jesters and jugglers. [11] Have their. [12] Will not prove.
[13] Whoso speaketh ribaldry. [14] Our modern *hind*, or servant.
[15] Petitioners. [16] Went. [17] Flattered. [18] Rise with ribaldry.
[19] Those Robertsmen—a class of malefactors mentioned in several statutes of the fourteenth century. The name may have meant originally Robin Hood's men, as Whitaker conjectures.
[20] Sloth. [21] Pursue.
[22] Gather them together.

They wenten forth in hir way[1]
With many wise tales,
And hadden leave to lien[2]
All hir life after.
I seigh some that seiden[3]
They had y-sought saints:
To each a tale that they told
Hir tongue was tempered to lie[4]
More than to say sooth,
It seemed by hir speech.
Hermits on an heap,[5]
With hooked staves,
Wenten to Walsingham,
And hir wenches after;
Great loobies and long,
That loath were to swink,[6]
Clothed hem in copes
To be knowen from other,
And shopen hem[7] hermits
Hir ease to have.
I found there freres,
All the four orders,
Preaching the people
For profit of hem selve
Glosed the gospel
As hem good liked;[8]
For covetise of copes[9]
Construed it as they would.
Many of these master freres
Now clothen hem at liking,[10]
For hir money and hir merchandize
Marchen togeders.
For sith charity hath been chapman,
And chief to shrive lords,
Many ferlies han fallen[11]
In a few years:
But holy church and hi[12]
Hold better togeders,
The most mischief on mould[13]
Is mounting well fast.
There preached a pardoner,
As he a priest were;
Brought forth a bull
With many bishops' seals,
And said that himself might
Assoilen hem all,

[1] They went forth on their way.
[2] To lie.
[3] I saw some that said.
[4] In every tale that they told their tongue was trained to lie.
[5] In a crowd.
[6] Labour.
[7] Made themselves.
[8] As it seemed to them good.
[9] Covetousness of copes or rich clothing.
[10] Clothe themselves to their liking.
[11] Many wonders have happened.
[12] Unless holy church and they.
[13] The greatest mischief on earth.

Of falsehede of fasting,[1]
Of avowes y-broken.
Lewed[2] men leved[3] it well,
And liked his words;
Comen up kneeling
To kissen his bulls:
He bouched[4] hem with his brevet,[5]
And bleared hir eyen,[6]
And raught with his ragman[7]
Ringes and brooches.

Here it will be admitted, we have both a well-filled canvas and a picture with a good deal of life and stir in it. The satiric touches are also natural and effective; and the expression clear, easy, and not deficient in vigour.

PIERS PLOUGHMAN'S CREED.

The popularity of Langland's poem appears to have brought alliterative verse into fashion again even for poems of considerable length: several romances were written in it, such as that of William and the Werwolf, that of Alexander, that of Jerusalem, and others; and the use of it was continued throughout the greater part of the fifteenth century. But the most remarkable imitation of the Vision is the poem entitled Piers the Ploughman's Creed, which appears to have been written about the end of the fourteenth century: it was first printed separately at London, in 4to. by Reynold Wolfe, in 1553; then by Rogers, along with the Vision, in 1561. In modern times it has also been printed separately, in 1814, as a companion to Whitaker's edition of the Vision; and, along with the Vision, in Mr. Wright's edition of 1842. The Creed is the composition of a follower of Wyclif, and an avowed opponent of Romanism. Here, Mr. Wright observes, "Piers Ploughman is no longer an allegorical personage: he is the simple representative of the peasant rising up to judge and act for himself—the English *sans-culotte* of

[1] Of breaking fast-days. [2] Ignorant. [3] Loved.
[4] Stopped their mouths. [5] Little brief. [6] Bedimmed their eyes.
[7] Reached, drew in, with his catalogue or roll of names?

the fourteenth century, if we may be allowed the comparison." The satire, or invective, in this effusion (which consists only of 1697 short lines), is directed altogether against the clergy, and especially the monks or friars; and Piers or Peter is represented as a poor ploughman from whom the writer receives that instruction in Christian truth which he had sought for in vain from every order of these licensed teachers. The language is quite as antique as that of the Vision, as may appear from the following passage, in which Piers is introduced:—

Then turned I me forth,
And talked to myself
Of the falsehede of this folk,
How faithless they weren
And as I went by the way
Weeping for sorrow,
I see a seely [1] man me by
Opon the plough hongen.[2]
His coat was of a clout [3]
That cary [4] was y-called;
His hood was full of holes,
And his hair out;
With his knopped shoon [5]
Clouted full thick,
His ton [6] toteden [7] out
As he the lond treaded:
His hosen overhongen his hoc-shynes [8]
On everich a side,
All beslomered [9] in fen [10]
As he the plough followed.
Twey [11] mittens as meter [12]
Made all of clouts,
The fingers weren for-weard [13]
And full of fen honged.
This whit [14] wasled [15] in the feen [16]
Almost to the ancle:
Four rotheren [17] him beforn,
That feeble were worthy; [18]

[1] Simple. [2] Hung, bent, over. [3] Cloth.
[4] This is probably the same word that we have elsewhere in *caury maury*. It would seem to be the name of a kind of cloth.
[5] Knobbed shoes. [6] Toes. [7] Peeped.
[8] Neither of Mr. Wright's explanations seems quite satisfactory: "crooked shins;" or "the shin towards the *hock* or ankle?"
[9] Bedaubed. [10] Mud. [11] Two.
[12] Mr. Wright suggests *fitter;* which does not seem to make sense.
[13] Were worn out. [14] Wight. [15] Dirtied himself.
[16] Fen, mud. [17] Oxen (the Four Evangelists).
[18] Become? Perhaps the true reading is *forthy*, that is, *for that*.

Men might reckon each a rib[1]
So rentful[2] they weren.
His wife walked him with,
With a long goad,
In a cutted coat
Cutted full high,
Wrapped in a winnow[3] sheet
To wearen her fro weders,[4]
Barefoot on the bare ice,
That the blood followed.
And at the lond's end[5] lath[6]
A little crom-bolle,[7]
And thereon lay a little child
Lapped in clouts,
And tweyn of twey years old[8]
Opon another side.
And all they songen[9] o[10] song,
That sorrow was to hearen;
They crieden all o cry,
A careful note.
The seely man sighed sore,
And said, "Children, beth[11] still."
This man looked opon me,
And leet the plough stonden;[12]
And said, "Seely man,
Why sighest thou so hard?
Gif thee lack lifelode,[13]
Lene thee ich will[14]
Swich[15] good as God hath sent:
Go we, leve brother."[16]

1 Each rib. 2 Meagre? 3 Winnowing.
4 The meaning seems to be, "to protect her from the weather."
5 The end of the field. 6 Lieth?
7 Mr. Wright explains by "crum-bowl."
8 Two of two years old. 9 Sang. 10 One.
11 Be. 12 Let the plough stand.
13 If livelihood lack, or be wanting to, thee.
14 Give or lend thee I will. 15 Such.
16 Let us go, dear brother.

THIRD ENGLISH.

(Mixed or Compound English.)

GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

The Vision of Piers Ploughman is our earliest poetical work of any considerable extent that may still be read with pleasure; but not much of its attraction lies in its poetry. It interests us chiefly as rather a lively picture (which, however, would have been nearly as effective in prose) of much in the manners and general social condition of the time, and of the new spirit of opposition to old things which was then astir; partly, too, by the language and style, and as a monument of a peculiar species of versification. Langland, or whoever was the author, probably contributed by this great work to the advancement of his native tongue to a larger extent than he has had credit for. The grammatical forms of his English will be found to be very nearly, if not exactly the same with those of Chaucer's; his vocabulary, if more sparingly admitting the non-Teutonic element, still does not abjure the principle of the same composite constitution; nor is his style much inferior in mere regularity and clearness. So long a work was not likely to have been undertaken except by one who felt himself to be in full possession of the language as it existed: the writer was no doubt prompted to engage in such a task in great part by his gift of ready expression; and he could not fail to gain additional fluency and skill in the course of the composition, especially with a

construction of verse demanding so incessant an attention to words and syllables. The popularity of the poem, too, would diffuse and establish whatever improvements in the language it may have introduced or exemplified. In addition to the ability displayed in it, and the popular spirit of the day with which it was animated, its position in the national literature naturally and deservedly gave to the Vision of Piers Ploughman an extraordinary influence; for it has the distinction (so far as is either known or probable) of being the earliest original work, of any magnitude, in the present form of the language. Robert of Gloucester and Robert de Brunne, Langland's predecessors, were both, it may be remembered, only translators or paraphrasts.

If Langland, however, is our earliest original writer, Chaucer is still our first great poet, and the true father of our literature, properly so called. Compared with his productions, all that precedes is barbarism. But what is much more remarkable is, that very little of what has followed in the space of nearly five centuries that has elapsed since he lived and wrote is worthy of being compared with what he has left us. He is in our English poetry almost what Homer is in that of Greece, and Dante in that of Italy—at least in his own sphere still the greatest light.

'Although, therefore, according to the scheme of the history of the language which has been propounded, the third form of it, or that which still subsists, may be regarded as having taken its commencement perhaps a full century before the date at which we are now arrived, and so as taking in the works, not only of Langland, but of his predecessors from Robert of Gloucester inclusive, our living English Literature may be most fitly held to begin with the poetry of Chaucer. It will thus count an existence already of above five centuries. Chaucer is supposed to have been born about the beginning of the reign of Edward III.—in the year '328, if we may trust what is said to have been the ancient nscription on his tombstone; so that he had no doubt begun to write, and was probably well known as a poet, at

least as early as Langland. They may indeed have been contemporaries in the strictest sense of the word, for anything that is ascertained. If Langland wrote the Creed of Piers Ploughman, as well as the Vision, which (although it has not, we believe, been suggested) is neither impossible nor very unlikely, he must have lived to as late, or very nearly as late, a date as Chaucer, who is held to have died in 1400. At the same time, as Langland's greatest, if not only, work appears to have been produced not long after the middle of the reign of Edward III., and the composition of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales not to have been begun till about the middle of that of Richard II., the probability certainly is, regard being had to the species and character of these poems, each seemingly impressed with a long experience of life, that Langland, if not the earlier writer, was the elder man.

The writings of Chaucer are very voluminous; comprising, in so far as they have come down to us, in verse, The Canterbury Tales; the Romaunt of the Rose, in 7701 lines, a translation from the French Roman de la Rose of Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun; Troilus and Creseide, in Five Books, on the same subject as the Filostrato of Boccaccio; The House of Fame, in Three Books; Chaucer's Dream, in 2235 lines; the Book of the Duchess (sometimes called the Dream of Chaucer), 1334 lines; the Assembly of Fowls, 694 lines; the Flower and the Leaf, 595 lines; the Court of Love, 1442 lines; together with many ballads and other minor pieces: and in prose (besides portions of the Canterbury Tales), a translation of Boethius De Consolatione Philosophiæ; the Testament of Love, an imitation of the same treatise; and a Treatise on the Astrolabe, addressed to his son Lewis in 1391, of which, however, we have only two out of five parts of which it was intended to consist. All these works have been printed, most of them more than once; and a good many other pieces have also been attributed to Chaucer which are either known to be the compositions of other poets, or of which at least there is no

evidence or probability that he is the author. Only the Canterbury Tales, however, have as yet enjoyed the advantage of anything like careful editing. Tyrwhitt's elaborate edition was first published, in 4 vols. 8vo., in 1775, his Glossary to all the genuine works of Chaucer having followed in 1778; and another edition, presenting a new text, and also accompanied with notes and a Glossary, was brought out by Mr. T. Wright for the Percy Society in 1847.

In his introductory Essay on the Language and Versification of Chaucer, Tyrwhitt observes, that at the time when this great writer made his first essays the use of rhyme was established in English poetry, not exclusively (as we have seen by the example of the Vision of Piers Ploughman) but very generally, "so that in this respect he had little to do but to imitate his predecessors." But the metrical part of our poetry, the learned editor conceives, "was capable of more improvement, by the polishing of the measures already in use, as well as by the introduction of new modes of versification." "With respect," he continues, "to the regular measures then in use, they may be reduced, I think, to four. First, the long Iambic metre, consisting of not more than fifteen nor less than fourteen syllables, and broken by a cæsura at the eighth syllable. Secondly, the Alexandrine metre, consisting of not more than thirteen syllables nor less than twelve, with a cæsura at the sixth. Thirdly, the Octosyllable metre, which was in reality the ancient dimeter Iambic. Fourthly, the stanza of six verses, of which the first, second, fourth, and fifth were in the complete octosyllable metre, and the third and last catalectic—that is, wanting a syllable, or even two." The first of these metres Tyrwhitt considers to be exemplified in the Ormulum, and probably also in the Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester, if the genuine text could be recovered; the second, apparently, by Robert de Brunne, in imitation of his French original, although his verse in Hearne's edition is frequently defective: the third and fourth were very common, being then

generally used in lighter compositions, as they still are. "In the first of these metres," he proceeds, "it does not appear that Chaucer ever composed at all (for I presume no one can imagine that he was the author of Gamelyn), or in the second; and in the fourth we have nothing of his but the Rhyme of Sire Thopas, which, being intended to ridicule the vulgar romancers, seems to have been purposely written in their favourite metre. In the third, or octosyllable metre, he has left several compositions, particularly an imperfect translation of the Roman de la Rose, which was probably one of his earliest performances, The House of Fame, The Dethe of the Duchesse Blanche, and a poem called his Dreme: upon all which it will be sufficient here to observe in general, that, if he had given no other proofs of his poetical faculty, these alone must have secured to him the pre-eminence above all his predecessors and contemporaries in point of versification. But by far the most considerable part of Chaucer's works is written in that kind of metre which we now call the Heroic, either in distichs or stanzas; and, as I have not been able to discover any instance of this metre being used by any English poet before him, I am much inclined to suppose that he was the first introducer of it into our language." It had been long practised by the writers both in the northern and southern French; and within the half century before Chaucer wrote it had been successfully cultivated, in preference to every other metre, by the great poets of Italy—Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio. Tyrwhitt argues, therefore, that Chaucer may have borrowed his new English verse either from the French or from the Italian.

That the particular species of verse in which Chaucer has written his Canterbury Tales and some of his other poems had not been used by any other English poet before him, has not, we believe, been disputed, and does not appear to be disputable, at least from such remains of our early poetical literature as we now possess. Here, then, is one important fact. It is certain, also, that the French, if

not likewise the Italian, poets who employed the decasyllabic (or more properly hendecasyllabic *) metre were well known to Chaucer. The presumption, therefore, that his new metre is, as Tyrwhitt asserts, this same Italian or French metre of ten or eleven syllables (our present heroic verse) becomes very strong.

Moreover, if Chaucer's verse be not constructed upon the principle of syllabical as well as accentual regularity, when was this principle, which is now the law and universal practice of our poetry, introduced? It will not be denied to have been completely established ever since the language acquired in all material respects its present form and pronunciation—that is to say, at least since the middle of the sixteenth century: if it was not by Chaucer at the end of the fourteenth, by whom among his followers in the course of the next hundred and fifty years was it first exemplified?

At present it is sufficient to say that no one of his successors throughout this space has hinted that any improvement, any change, had been made in the construction of English verse since Chaucer wrote. On the contrary, he is generally recognized by them as the great reformer of our language and our poetry, and as their master and instructor

* In the Italian language, at least, the original and proper form of the verse appears to have consisted of *eleven* syllables; whence the generical name of the metre is *endecasillabo*, and a verse of *ten* syllables is called *endecasillabo tronco*, and one of *twelve*, *endecasillabo sdrucciolo*. But these variations do not affect the prosodical character of the verse, which requires only that the tenth should be in all cases the last *accented* syllable. The modern English heroic or, as we commonly call it, ten-syllabled verse, still admits of being extended by an eleventh or even a twelfth *unaccented* syllable; although, from the constitution of our present language as to syllabic emphasis, such extension is with us the exception, not the rule, as it is (at least to the length of eleven syllables) in Italian. It may be doubted whether Chaucer's type or model line is to be considered as decasyllabic or hendecasyllabic; Tyrwhitt was of opinion that the greater number of his verses, when properly written and pronounced, would be found to consist of eleven syllables; and this will seem probable, if we look to what is assumed, on the theory of his versification which we are considering, to have been the pronunciation of the language in his day. At the same time many of his lines evidently consist (even on this theory) of ten syllables only; and such a construction of verse for ordinary purposes is become so much more agreeable to modern usage and taste that his poetry had better be so read whenever it can be done, even at the cost of thereby somewhat violating the exactness of the ancient pronunciation.

in their common art. By his friend and disciple Occleve he is called "the first finder of our fair langage." So Lydgate, in the next generation, celebrates him as his master—as "chief poet of Britain"—as

> —"he that was of making soverain,
> Whom all this lande of right ought prefer,
> Sith of our langage he was the lode-ster"—

and as—

> "The noble rhethor poet of Britain,
> That worthy was the laurer to have
> Of poetrye, and the palm attain;
> That made first to distil and rain
> The gold dew-drops of speech and eloquence
> Into our tongue through his excellence,
> And found the flowres first of rhetoric
> Our rude speech only to enlumine," &c.

A later writer, Gawin Douglas, sounds his praise as—

> "Venerable Chaucer, principal poet but[1] peer,
> Heavenly trumpet, orlege,[2] and regulere;[3]
> In eloquence balm, condict,[4] and dial,
> Milky fountain, clear strand, and rose rial,"[5]

in a strain, it must be confessed, more remarkable for enthusiastic vehemence than for poetical inspiration. The learned, and at the same time elegant, Leland, in the next age describes him as the writer to whom his country's tongue owes all its beauties:—

> "Anglia Chaucerum veneratur nostra poetam,
> Cui veneres debet patria lingua suas;"

and again, in another tribute, as having first reduced the language into regular form:—

> "Linguam qui patriam redegit illam
> In formam."

And such seems to have been the unbroken tradition down to Spenser, who, looking back through two centuries, hails his great predecessor as still the "well of English undefiled."

If now we proceed to examine Chaucer's verse, do we find it actually characterized by this regularity, which indis-

[1] Without. [2] Horologe, clock or watch. [3] Regulator
[4] Condiment. [5] Royal.

putably has at least from within a century and a half of his time been the law of our poetry? Not, if we assume that the English of Chaucer's time was read in all respects precisely like that of our own day. But are we warranted in assuming this? We know that some changes have taken place in the national pronunciation within a much shorter space. The accentuation of many words is different even in Shakespeare and his contemporaries from what it now is: even since the language has been what we may call settled, and the process of growth in it nearly stopped, there has still been observable a disposition in the accent or syllabic emphasis to project itself with more precipitation than formerly, to seize upon a more early enunciated part in dissyllables and other polysyllabic words than that to which it was wont to be attached. For example, we now always pronounce the word *aspect* with the accent on the first syllable; in the time of Shakespeare it was always accented on the last. We now call a certain short composition an *éssay;* but only a century ago it was called an *essáy:* "And write next winter," says Pope; "more essays on man." Probably at an earlier period, when this change was going on more actively, it was part of that general process by which the Teutonic, or native, element in our language eventually, after a long struggle, acquired the ascendancy over the French element; and, if so, for a time the accentuation of many words would be unfixed, or would oscillate between the two systems—the French habit of reserving itself for the final syllable, and the native tendency to cling to a prior portion of the word. This appears to have been the case in Chaucer's day: many words are manifestly in his poetry accented differently from what they are now (as is proved, upon either theory of his prosody, when they occur at the end of a verse), and in many also he seems to vary the accent—pronouncing, for instance, *lángage* in one line *langáge* in another—as suits his convenience. But again, under the tendency to elision and abbreviation, which is common to all languages in a state of growth, there can be no doubt

that, in the progress of the English tongue, from its first subjection to literary cultivation in the middle of the thirteenth century to its final settlement in the middle of the seventeenth, it dropt and lost altogether many short or unaccented syllables. Some of these, indeed, our poets still assert their right to revive in pressing circumstances: thus, though we now almost universally elide or suppress the *e* before the terminating *d* of the preterites and past participles of our verbs, it is still sometimes called into life again to make a distinct syllable in verse. Two centuries ago, when perhaps it was generally heard in the common speech of the people (as it still is in some of our provincial dialects), and when its suppression in reading prose would probably have been accounted an irregularity, it was as often sounded in verse as not, and the licence was probably considered to be taken when it was elided. The elision, when it took place, was generally marked by the omission of the vowel in the spelling. If we go back another century, we find the pronunciation of the termination as a distinct syllable to be clearly the rule and the prevailing practice, and the suppression of the vowel to be the rare exception. But even at so late a date as the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century, other short vowels as well as this were still occasionally pronounced, as they were almost always written. Both the genitive or possessive singular and the nominative plural of nouns were, down to this time, made by the addition not of *s* only, as now, but of *es* to the nominative singular; and the *es* makes a distinct syllable sometimes in Shakespeare, and often in Spenser. In Chaucer, therefore, it is only what we should expect that it should generally be so pronounced: it is evident that originally, or when it first appeared in the language it always was, and that the practice of running it and the preceding syllable together, as we now do, has only been gradually introduced and established.

The deficiencies of Chaucer's metre, Tyrwhitt contends, are to be chiefly supplied by the pronunciation of what he

calls "the *e* feminine;" by which he means the *e* which still terminates so many of our words, but is now either totally silent and ineffective in the pronunciation, or only lengthens or otherwise alters the sound of the preceding vowel—in either case is entirely inoperative upon the syllabication. Thus, such words as *large*, *strange*, *time*, &c., he conceives to be often dissyllables, and such words as *Romaine*, *sentence*, often trisyllables, in Chaucer. Some words also he holds to be lengthened a syllable by the intervention of such an *e*, now omitted both in speaking and writing, in the middle—as in *jug-e-ment*, *command-e-ment*, *vouch-e-safe*, &c.

Wallis, the distinguished mathematician, in his Grammar of the English Language (written in Latin, and published about the middle of the seventeenth century) had suggested that the origin of this silent *e* probably was, that it had originally been pronounced, though somewhat obscurely, as a distinct syllable, like the French *e* feminine, which still counts for such in the prosody of that language. Wallis adds, that the surest proof of this is to be found in our old poets, with whom the said *e* sometimes makes a syllable, sometimes not, as the verse requires. "With respect to words imported directly from France," observes Tyrwhitt, "it is certainly quite natural to suppose that for some time they retained their native pronunciation." "We have not indeed," he continues, "so clear a proof of the original pronunciation of the Saxon part of our language; but we know, from general observation, that all changes of pronunciation are generally made by small degrees; and therefore, when we find that a great number of those words which in Chaucer's time ended in *e* originally ended in *a*, we may reasonably presume that our ancestors first passed from the broader sound of *a* to the thinner sound of *e* feminine, and not at once from *a* to *e* mute. Besides, if the final *e* in such words was not pronounced, why was it added? From the time that it has confessedly ceased to be pronounced it has been gradually omitted in them, except where it may be supposed of use to lengthen or soften the preceding syllable,

as in *hope*, *name*, &c. But according to the ancient orthography it terminates many words of Saxon original where it cannot have been added for any such purpose, as *herte*, *childe*, *olde*, *wilde*, &c. In these, therefore, we must suppose that it was pronounced as *e* feminine, and made part of a second syllable, and so, by a parity of reason, in all others in which, as in these, it appears to have been substituted for the Saxon *a*." From all this Tyrwhitt concludes that "the pronunciation of the *e* feminine is founded on the nature of both the French and Saxon parts of our language," and therefore that "what is generally considered as an *e* mute, either at the end or in the middle of words, was anciently pronounced, but obscurely, like the *e* feminine of the French." In a note, referring to an opinion expressed by Wallis, who, observing that the French very often suppressed this short *e* in their common speech, was led to think that the pronunciation of it would perhaps shortly be in all cases disused among them, as among ourselves, he adds: "The prediction has certainly failed; but, notwithstanding, I will venture to say that when it was made it was not unworthy of Wallis's sagacity. Unluckily for its success, a number of eminent writers happened at that very time to be growing up in France, whose works, having since been received as standards of style, must probably fix for many centuries the ancient usage of the *e* feminine in poetry, and of course give a considerable check to the natural progress of the language. If the age of Edward III. had been as favourable to letters as that of Louis XIV.; if Chaucer and his contemporary poets had acquired the same authority here that Corneille, Molière, Racine, and Boileau have obtained in France; if their works had been published by themselves and perpetuated in a genuine state by printing; I think it probable that the *e* feminine would still have preserved its place, in our poetical language at least, and certainly without any prejudice to the smoothness of our versification."

In supporting his views by these reasons, Tyrwhitt

avoids having recourse to any arguments that might be drawn from the practice of Chaucer himself—that being in fact the matter in dispute; but his main proposition, to the extent at least of the alleged capacity of the now silent final *e* to make a distinct syllable in Chaucer's day, appears to be demonstrated by some instances in the poet's works. Thus, for example, in the following couplet from the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales, unless the word *Rome* which ends the first line be pronounced as a dissyllable, there will be no rhyme:—

> "That straight was comen from the court of Rome;
> Full loud he sang—Come hither, love, to me."

So again, in the Canon Yeoman's Tale, we have the following lines:—

> "And when this alchymister saw his time,
> Ris'th up, Sir Priest, quod he, and stondeth by me,"

in the first of which *time* must evidently in like manner be read as a word of two syllables. The same rhyme occurs in a quatrain in the Second Book of the Troilus and Creseide:—

> "All easily now, for the love of Marte,
> Quod Pandarus, for every thing hath time,
> So long abide, till that the night departe
> For all so sicker as thou liest here by me."

Finding *Rome* and *time* to be clearly dissyllables in these passages, it would seem that we ought, as Tyrwhitt remarks (Note on Prol. to Cant. Tales, 674), to have no scruple so to pronounce them and other similar words wherever the metre requires it.

"The notion, probably, which most people have of Chaucer," to borrow a few sentences of what we have written elsewhere, "is merely that he was a remarkably good poet for his day; but that, both from his language having become obsolete, and from the advancement which we have since made in poetical taste and skill, he may now be considered as fairly dead and buried in a literary, as well

as in a literal, sense. This, we suspect, is the common belief even of educated persons and of scholars who have not actually made acquaintance with Chaucer, but know him only by name or by sight;—by that antique-sounding dissyllable that seems to belong to another nation and tongue, as well as to another age; and by that strange costume of diction, grammar, and spelling, in which his thoughts are clothed, fluttering about them, as it appears to do, like the rags upon a scarecrow.

"Now, instead of this, the poetry of Chaucer is really, in all essential respects, about the greenest and freshest in our language. We have some higher poetry than Chaucer's —poetry that has more of the character of a revelation, or a voice from another world: we have none in which there is either a more abounding or a more bounding spirit of life, a truer or fuller natural inspiration. He may be said to verify, in another sense, the remark of Bacon, that what we commonly call antiquity was really the youth of the world: his poetry seems to breathe of a time when humanity was younger and more joyous-hearted than it now is. Undoubtedly he had an advantage as to this matter, in having been the first great poet of his country. Occupying this position, he stands in some degree between each of his successors and nature. The sire of a nation's minstrelsy is of necessity, though it may be unconsciously, regarded by all who come after him as almost a portion of nature—as one whose utterances are not so much the echo of hers as in very deed her own living voice—carrying in them a spirit as original and divine as the music of her running brooks, or of her breezes among the leaves. And there is not wanting something of reason in this idolatry. It is he alone who has conversed with nature directly, and without an interpreter—who has looked upon the glory of her countenance unveiled, and received upon his heart the perfect image of what she is. Succeeding poets, by reason of his intervention, and that imitation of him into which, in a greater or less degree, they are of necessity drawn, see her only, as

it were, wrapt in hazy and metamorphosing adornments, which human hands have woven for her, and are prevented from perfectly discerning the outline and the movements of her form by that encumbering investiture. They are the fallen race, who have been banished from the immediate presence of the divinity, and have been left only to conjecture from afar off the brightness of that majesty which sits throned to them behind impenetrable clouds: he is the First Man, who has seen God walking in the garden, and communed with him face to face.

"But Chaucer is the Homer of his country, not only as having been the earliest of her poets (deserving to be so called), but also as being still one of her greatest. The names of Spenser, of Shakespeare, and of Milton are the only other names that can be placed on the same line with his.

"His poetry exhibits, in as remarkable a degree perhaps as any other in any language, an intermixture and combination of what are usually deemed the most opposite excellences. Great poet as he is, we might almost say of him that his genius has as much about it of the spirit of prose as of poetry, and that, if he had not sung so admirably as he has done of flowery meadows, and summer skies, and gorgeous ceremonials, and high or tender passions, and the other themes over which the imagination loves best to pour her vivifying light, he would have won to himself the renown of a Montaigne or a Swift by the originality and penetrating sagacity of his observations on ordinary life, his insight into motives and character, the richness and peculiarity of his humour, the sharp edge of his satire, and the propriety, flexibility, and exquisite expressiveness of his refined yet natural diction. Even like the varied visible creation around us, his poetry too has its earth, its sea, and its sky, and all the 'sweet vicissitudes' of each. Here you have the clear-eyed observer of man as he is, catching 'the manners living as they rise,' and fixing them in pictures where not their minutest lineament is or ever can be lost:

here he is the inspired dreamer, by whom earth and all its realities are forgotten, as his spirit soars and sings in the finer air and amid the diviner beauty of some far-off world of its own. Now the riotous verse rings loud with the turbulence of human merriment and laughter, casting from it, as it dashes on its way, flash after flash of all the forms of wit and comedy; now it is the tranquillizing companionship of the sights and sounds of inanimate nature of which the poet's heart is full—the springing herbage, and the dew-drops on the leaf, and the rivulets glad beneath the morning ray and dancing to their own simple music. From mere narrative and playful humour up to the heights of imaginative and impassioned song, his genius has exercised itself in all styles of poetry, and won imperishable laurels in all."*

It has been commonly believed that one of the chief sources from which Chaucer drew both the form and the spirit of his poetry was the recent and contemporary poetry of Italy—that eldest portion of what is properly called the literature of modern Europe, the produce of the genius of Petrarch and Boccaccio and their predecessor and master, Dante. But, although this may have been the case, it is by no means certain that it was so; and some circumstances seem to make it rather improbable that Chaucer was a reader or student of Italian. Of those of his poems which have been supposed to be translations from the Italian, it must be considered very doubtful if any one was really derived by him from that language. The story of his Palamon and Arcite, which, as the Knight's Tale, begins the Canterbury Tales, but which either in its present or another form appears to have been originally composed as a separate work, is substantially the same with that of Boccaccio's heroic poem in twelve books entitled Le Teseide—a fact which, we believe, was first pointed out by Warton. But an examination of the two poems leads rather to the conclusion that they are both founded upon a common

* Printing Machine, No. 37 (1835).

original than that the one was taken from the other. Boccaccio's poem extends to about 12,000 octosyllabic, Chaucer's to not many more than 2000 decasyllabic, verses: and not only is the story in the one much less detailed than in the other, but the two versions differ in some of the main circumstances.* Chaucer, moreover, nowhere mentions Boccaccio as his original; on the contrary, as Warton has himself noticed, he professes to draw his materials, not from the works of any contemporary, but from "olde Stories," and "olde bookes that all this story telleth more plain."** Tyrwhitt, too, while holding, as well as Warton, that Chaucer's original was Boccaccio, admits that the latter was in all probability not the inventor of the story.† Boccaccio himself, in a letter relating to his poem, describes the story as very ancient, and as existing in what he calls *Latino volgare*, by which he may mean rather the Provençal than the Italian.†† In fact, as both Warton and Tyrwhitt have shown, there is reason to believe that it had previously been one of the themes of romantic poetry in various languages. The passages pointed out by Tyrwhitt in his notes to Chaucer's poem, as translated or imitated from that of Boccaccio, are few and insignificant, and the resemblances they present would be sufficiently accounted

* See this pointed out by Dr. Nott (who nevertheless assumes the one poem to be a translation from the other), in a note to his Dissertation on the State of English Poetry before the Sixteenth Century, p. CCLXXIV.

** Warton's Hist. Eng. Poetry, II. 179.

† Introductory Discourse to Canterbury Tales, Note (13).

†† The letter is addressed to his mistress (la Fiametta), Mary of Aragon, a natural daughter of Robert king of Naples. "Trovata," he says, "una antichissima storia, ed al più delle genti non manifesta, in Latino volgare," &c. The expression here has a curious resemblance to the words used by Chaucer in enumerating his own works in the Legende of Good Women, *v.* 420,—

"He made the boke that hight the House of Fame. &c.
And all the love of Palamon and Arcite
Of Thebes, *though the story is knowen lite.*"

Tyrwhitt's interpretation of these last words is, that they seem to imply that the poem to which they allude, the Palamon and Arcite (as first composed), had not made itself very popular. Both he and Warton understand the *Latino volgare*, as meaning the Italian language in this passage of the letter to La Fiametta, as well as in a stanza which he quotes from the Teseide in Discourse, Note (9).

for on the supposition of both writers having drawn from a common source. Nearly the same observations apply to the supposed obligations of Chaucer in his Troilus and Creseide to another poetical work of Boccaccio's, his Filostrato. The discovery of these was first announced by Tyrwhitt in his Essay prefixed to the Canterbury Tales. But Chaucer himself tells us (II. 14) that he translates his poem "out of Latin;" and in other passages (I. 394, and v. 1653), he expressly declares his "auctor" or author, to be named *Lollius*. In a note to the Parson's Tale, in the Canterbury Tales, Tyrwhitt assumes that Lollius is another name for Boccaccio, but how this should be he confesses himself unable to explain. In his Glossary (a later publication), he merely describes Lollius as "a writer from whom Chaucer professes to have translated his poem of Troilus and Creseide," adding, "I have not been able to find any further account of him." It is remarkable that he should omit to notice that Lollius is mentioned by Chaucer in another poem, his House of Fame (III. 378), as one of the writers of the Trojan story, along with Homer, Dares Phrygius, Livy (whom he calls Titus), Guido of Colonna, and "English Galfrid," that is Geoffrey of Monmouth. The only writer of the name of Lollius of whom anything is now known appears to be Lollius Urbicus, who is stated to have lived in the third century, and to have composed a history of his own time, which, however no longer exists.* But our ignorance of who Chaucer's Lollius was does not entitle us to assume that it is Boccaccio whom he designates by that name. Beside, the two poems have only that general resemblance which would result from their subject being the same, and their having been founded upon a common original. Tyrwhitt (note to Parson's Tale), while he insists that the fact of the one being borrowed from the other "is evident, not only from the fable and characters, which are the same in both poems, but also from a number of

* See Warton, Hist. Eng. Poetry, II. 220; and Vossius, de Historicis Latinis, ed. 1651, p. 176.

passages in the English which are literally translated from the Italian," admits that "at the same time there are several long passages, and even episodes, in the Troilus of which there are no traces in the Filostrato;" and Warton makes the same statement almost in the same words.* Tyrwhitt acknowledges elsewhere, too, that the form of Chaucer's stanza in the Troilus does not appear ever to have been used by Boccaccio, nor does he profess to have been able to find such a stanza in any early Italian poetry.** The only other composition of Chaucer's for which he can be imagined to have had an Italian original is his Clerk's Tale in the Canterbury Tales, the matchless story of Griselda. This is one of the stories of the Decameron; but it was not from Boccaccio's Italian that Chaucer took it, but from Petrarch's Latin, as he must be understood to intimate in the Prologue, where he says, or makes the narrator say—

> "I woll you tell a tale which that I
> Learned at Padowe of a worthy clerk,
> As preved by his wordes and his werk:
> He is now dead and nailed in his chest;
> I pray to God so yeve his soule rest.
> Francis Petrarch, the laureat poet,
> Highte this clerk, whose rhethoricke sweet
> Enlumined all Itaille of poetrie."

Petrarch's Latin translation of Boccaccio's tale is, as Tyrwhitt states, printed in all the editions of his works, under the title of *De Obedientia et Fide Uxoria Mythologia* (a Myth on Wifely Obedience and Faithfulness). But, indeed, Chaucer may not have even had Petrarch's translation before him; for Petrarch, in his letter to Boccaccio, in which he states that he had translated it from the Decameron, only recently come into his hands, informs his friend also that the story had been known to him many years before. He may therefore have communicated it orally to Chaucer, through the medium of what was probably their common medium of communication, the Latin tongue, if they ever

* Hist. Eng. Poetry, II. p. 221, note.
** Essay. § 9.

met, at Padua or elsewhere, as it is asserted they did. All that we are concerned with at present, is the fact that it does not appear to have been taken by Chaucer from the Decameron: he makes no reference to Boccaccio as his authority, and, while it is the only one of the Canterbury Tales which could otherwise have been suspected with any probability to have been derived from that work, it is at the same time one an acquaintance with which we know he had at least the means of acquiring through another language than the Italian. To these considerations may be added a remark made by Sir Harris Nicolas:—"That Chaucer was not acquainted with Italian," says that writer, "may be inferred from his not having introduced any Italian quotation into his works, redundant as they are with Latin and French words and phrases." To which he subjoins in a note: "Though Chaucer's writings have not been examined for the purpose, the remark in the text is not made altogether from recollection; for at the end of Speght's edition of Chaucer's works translations are given of the Latin and French words in the poems, but not a single Italian word is mentioned."*

It may be questioned, then, if much more than the fame of Italian song had reached the ear of Chaucer; but, at all events, the foreign poetry with which he was most familiar

* Life of Chaucer, p. 25. Sir Harris had said before:—"Though Chaucer undoubtedly knew Latin and French, it is by no means certain, notwithstanding his supposed obligations to the Decameron, that he was as well acquainted with Italian. There may have been a common Latin original of the main incidents of many if not of all the Tales for which Chaucer is supposed to have been wholly indebted to Boccaccio, and from which original Boccaccio himself may have taken them." Beside the Clerk's Tale, which has been noticed above, the only stories in the Canterbury Tales which are found in the Decameron are the Reeve's Tale, the Shipman's Tale, and the Franklin's Tale; but both Tyrwhitt and Warton, while maintaining Chaucer's obligations in other respects to the Italian writers, admit that the two former are much more probably derived from French Fabliaux (the particular fabliau, indeed, on which the Reeve's Tale appears to be founded has been published by Le Grand); and the Franklin's Tale is expressly stated by Chaucer himself to be a Breton lay. He nowhere mentions Boccaccio or his Decameron, or any other Italian authority. Of the Pardoner's Tale, "the mere outline," as Tyrwhitt states, is to be found in the *Cento Novelle Antiche;* but the greater part of that collection is borrowed from the Contes and Fabliaux of the French.

was certainly that of France. This, indeed, was probably still accounted everywhere the classic poetical literature of the modern world; the younger poetry of Italy, which was itself a derivation from that common fountain-head, had not yet, with all its real superiority, either supplanted the old lays and romances of the trouvères and troubadours, or even taken its place by their side. The earliest English, as well as the earliest Italian, poetry was for the most part a translation or imitation of that of France. Of the poetry written in the French language, indeed, in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, the larger portion, as we have seen, was produced in England, for English readers, and to a considerable extent by natives of this country. French poetry was not, therefore, during this era, regarded among us as a foreign literature at all; and even at a later date it must have been looked back upon by every educated Englishman as rather a part of that of his own land. For a century, or perhaps more, before Chaucer arose, the greater number of our common versifiers had been busy in translating the French romances and other poetry into English, which was now fast becoming the ordinary or only speech even of the educated classes; but this work had for the most part been done with little pains or skill, and with no higher ambition than to convey the mere sense of the French original to the English reader. By the time when Chaucer began to write, in the latter half of the fourteenth century, the French language appears to have almost gone out of use as a common medium of communication; the English on the other hand, as we may see by the poetry of Langland and Minot as compared with that of Robert of Gloucester, had, in the course of the preceding hundred years, thrown off much of its primitive rudeness, and acquired a considerable degree of regularity and flexibility, and general fitness for literary composition. In these circumstances, writing in French in England was over for any good purpose: Chaucer himself observes in the prologue to his prose treatise entitled the Testament of Love:—"Certes there ben

some that speak their poesy matter in French, of which speech the Frenchmen have as good a fantasy as we have in hearing of Frenchmen's English." And again:—"Let, then, clerks enditen in Latin, for they have the property of science and the knowinge in that faculty; and let Frenchmen in their French also endite their quaint terms, for it is kindly [natural] to their mouths; and let us show our fantasies in such words as we learneden of our dames' tongue." The two languages, in short, like the two nations, were now become completely separated, and in some sort hostile: as the Kings of England were no longer either Dukes of Normandy or Earls of Poitou, and recently a fierce war had sprung up still more effectually to divide the one country from the other, and to break up all intercourse between them, so the French tongue was fast growing to be almost as strange and distinctly foreign among us as the English had always been in France. Chaucer's original purpose and aim may be supposed to have been that of the generality of his immediate predecessors, to put his countrymen in possession of some of the best productions of the French poets, so far as that could be done by translation; and with his genius and accomplishments, and the greater pains he was willing to take with it, we may conjecture that he hoped to execute his task in a manner very superior to that in which such work had hitherto been performed. With these views he undertook what was probably his earliest composition of any length, his translation of the *Roman de la Rose*, begun by Guillaume de Lorris, who died about 1260, and continued and finished by Jean de Meun, whose date is about half a century later. "This poem," says Warton, "is esteemed by the French the most valuable piece of their old poetry. It is far beyond the rude efforts of all their preceding romancers; and they have nothing equal to it before the reign of Francis the First, who died in the year 1547. But there is a considerable difference in the merit of the two authors. William of Lorris, who wrote not one quarter of the poem, is remarkable for his elegance and luxuriance of

description, and is a beautiful painter of allegorical personages. John of Meun is a writer of another cast. He possesses but little of his predecessor's inventive and poetical vein; and in that respect, he was not properly qualified to finish a poem begun by William of Lorris. But he has strong satire and great liveliness. He was one of the wits of the court of Charles le Bel. The difficulties and dangers of a lover in pursuing and obtaining the object of his desires are the literal argument of this poem. This design is couched under the argument of a rose, which our lover after frequent obstacles gathers in a delicious garden. He traverses vast ditches, scales lofty walls, and forces the gates of adamantine and almost impregnable castles. These enchanted fortresses are all inhabited by various divinities; some of which assist, and some oppose, the lover's progress."* The entire poem consists of no fewer than 22,734 verses, of which only 4,149 are the composition of William of Lorris. All this portion has been translated by Chaucer, and also about half of the 18,588 lines written by De Meun: his version comprehends 13,105 lines of the French poem. These, however, he has managed to comprehend in 7701 (Warton says 7699) English verses: this is effected by a great compression and curtailment of De Meun's part; for, while the 4149 French verses of De Lorris are fully and faithfully rendered in 4432 English verses, the 8956 that follow by De Meun are reduced in the translation to 3269. Warton, who exhibits ample specimens both of the translation and of the original, considers that Chaucer has throughout at least equalled De Lorris, and decidedly surpassed and improved De Meun.

No verse so flowing and harmonious as what we have in this translation, no diction at once so clear, correct, and expressive, had, it is probable, adorned and brought out the capabilities of his native tongue when Chaucer began to write. Several of his subsequent poems are also in whole or in part translations; the Troilus and Creseide, the Legend

* Hist. Eng. Poetry, II. 209.

of Good Women (much of which is borrowed from Ovid's Epistles), and others. But we must pass over these, and will take our first extract from his House of Fame, no foreign original of which has been discovered, although Warton is inclined to think that it may have been translated or paraphrased from the Provençal. Chaucer, however, seems to appear in it in his own person; at least the poet or dreamer is in the course of it more than once addressed by the name of Geoffrey. And in the following passage he seems to describe his own occupation and habits of life. It is addressed to him by the golden but living Eagle, who has carried him up into the air in his talons, and by whom the marvellous sights he relates are shown and explained to him:—

First, I, that in my feet have thee,
Of whom thou hast great fear and wonder,
Am dwelling with the God of Thunder,
Which men ycallen Jupiter,
That doth me flyen full oft fer[1]
To do all his commandement;
And for this cause he hath me sent
To thee; harken now by thy trouth;
Certain he hath of thee great routh,[2]
For that thou hast so truëly
So long served ententifly[3]
His blinde nephew Cupido,
And the fair queen Venus also,
Withouten guerdon ever yet;
And natheless[4] hast set thy wit
Althoughe in thy head full lit is
To make bokes, songs, and dittes,
In rhime or elles in cadence,
As thou best canst, in reverence
Of Love and of his servants eke,
That have his service sought and seek;
And painest thee to praise his art,
Although thou haddest never part;
Wherefore, so wisely God me bless,
Jovis yhalt[5] it great humbless,
And virtue eke, that thou wilt make
Anight[6] full oft thine head to ache
In thy study, so thou ywritest,
And ever more of Love enditest,

[1] Far. [2] Ruth, pity. [3] Attentively.
[4] Nevertheless. [5] Jove held. [6] O'nights, at night.

In honour of him and praisings,
And in his folkes furtherings,
And in their matter all devisest,
And not him ne his folk despisest,
Although thou may'st go in the dance
Of them that him list not avance:
Wherefore, as I now said, ywis,
Jupiter considreth well this,
And als, beau sire,[1] of other things,
That is, that thou hast no tidings
Of Loves folk if they be glade,
Ne of nothing else that God made,
And not only fro[2] fer countree
That no tidinges comen to thee,
Not of thy very neighebores,
That dwellen almost at thy dores,
Thou hearest neither that ne this;
For, when thy labour all done is,
And hast made all thy reckonings,
Instead of rest and of new things,
Thou goest home to thine house anon,
And, all so dumb as any stone,
Thou sittest at another book,
Till fully dazed is thy look,
And livest thus as an hermit,
Although thine abstinence is lit;
And therefore Jovis, through his grace,
Will that I bear thee to a place
Which that yhight the House of Fame, &c.

From the mention of his *reckonings* in this passage, Tyrwhitt conjectures that Chaucer probably wrote the House of Fame while he held the office of Comptroller of the Customs of Wools, to which he was appointed in 1374. It may be regarded, therefore, as one of the productions of the second or middle stage of his poetical life, as the Romaunt of the Rose is supposed to have been of the first. The House of Fame is in three books, comprising in all 2190 lines, and is an exceedingly interesting poem on other accounts, as well as for the reference which Chaucer seems to make in it to himself, and the circumstances of his own life. In one place, we have an illustration drawn from a novelty which we might have thought had hardly yet become familiar enough for the purposes of poetry. The passage, too, is a sample of the wild, almost grotesque

[1] Fair sir. [2] From.

imagination, and force of expression, for which the poem is remarkable:—

What did this Æolus? but he
Took out his blacke trompe of brass,
That fouler than the devil was,
And gan this trompe for to blow
As all the world should overthrow.
Throughout every region
Ywent this foule trompes soun,
As swift as pellet out of gun
When fire is in the powder run:
And such a smoke gan out wend
Out of the foule trompes end,
Black, blue, and greenish, swartish, red,
As doeth where that men melt lead,
Lo all on high from the tewel:[1]
And thereto one thing saw I well,
That aye the ferther that it ran
The greater wexen it began,
As doth the river from a well;
And it stank as the pit of hell.

The old mechanical artillery, however, is alluded to in another passage as if also still in use:—

And the noise which that I heard,
For all the world right so it fered[2]
As doth the routing[3] of the stone
That fro the engine is letten gone.

Through such deeper thinking and bolder writing as we have in the House of Fame, Chaucer appears to have advanced from the descriptive luxuriance of the Romaunt of the Rose to his most matured style in the Canterbury Tales. This is not only his greatest work, but it towers above all else that he has written, like some palace or cathedral ascending with its broad and lofty dimensions from among the common buildings of a city. His genius is another thing here altogether from what it is in his other writings. Elsewhere he seems at work only for the day that is passing over him; here, for all time. All his poetical faculties put forth a strength in the Canterbury Tales they have nowhere else shown; not only is his knowledge of life and cha-

[1] Funnel.
[2] Fared, proceeded. [3] Roared.

racter greater, his style firmer, clearer, more flexible, and more expressive, his humour more subtle and various, but his fancy is more nimble-winged, his imagination far richer and more gorgeous, his sensibility infinitely more delicate and more profound. And this great work of Chaucer's is nearly as remarkably distinguished by its peculiar character from the great works of other poets as it is from the rest of his own compositions. Among ourselves at least, if we except Shakespeare, no other poet has yet arisen to rival the author of the Canterbury Tales in the entire assemblage of his various powers. Spenser's is a more aerial, Milton's a loftier song; but neither possesses the wonderful combination of contrasted and almost opposite characteristics which we have in Chaucer:—the sportive fancy, painting and gilding everything, with the keen, observant, matter-of-fact spirit that looks through whatever it glances at; the soaring and creative imagination, with the homely sagacity, and healthy relish for all the realities of things; the unrivalled tenderness and pathos, with the quaintest humour and the most exuberant merriment; the wisdom at once and the wit; the all that is best, in short, both in poetry and in prose, at the same time.

The Canterbury Tales is an unfinished, or at least, as we have it, an imperfect work; but it contains above 17,000 verses, besides more than a fourth of that quantity of matter in prose. The Tales (including the two in prose) are twenty-four in number; and they are interspersed with introductions to each, generally short, called prologues, besides the Prologue to the whole work, in which the pilgrims or narrators of the tales are severally described, and which consists of between 800 and 900 lines. The Prologue to the Wife of Bath's Tale is fully as long. All the twenty-four tales are complete, except only the Cook's Tale, of which we have only a few lines, the Squire's Tale, which remains "half-told," and the burlesque Tale of Sir Thopas, which is designedly broken off in the middle. Of the nineteen complete tales in verse, the longest are the Knight's Tale of

2250 verses, the Clerk's Tale of 1156, and the Merchant's Tale of 1172. The entire work, with the exception of the prose tales and the Rime of Sir Thopas (205 lines), is in decasyllabic (or hendecasyllabic) verse, arranged either in couplets or in stanzas.

The general Prologue is a gallery of pictures almost unmatched for their air of life and truthfulness. Here is one of them:—

There was also a nun, a Prioress
That of her smiling was full simple and coy,
Her greatest oathe n'as but by Saint Loy;[1]
And she was cleped[2] Madame Eglantine.
Full well she sange the service divine,
Entuned in her nose full sweetely;
And French she spake full fair and fetisly[3]
After the school of Stratford atte Bow,
For French of Paris was to her unknow.[4]
At meate was she well ytaught withal;
She let no morsel from her lippes fall,
Ne wet her fingers in her sauce deep;
Well could she carry a morsel and well keep
Thatte no droppe ne fell upon her breast:
In curtesy was set full much her lest.[5]
Her over-lippe wiped she so clean
That in her cuppe was no ferthing[6] seen
Of grease when she drunken had her draught.
Full seemely after her meat she raught.[7]
And sickerly[8] she was of great disport,
And full pleasant and amiable of port,
And pained[9] her to counterfeiten cheer
Of court, and been estatelich of manere,
And to been holden digne[10] of reverence
But for to speaken of her conscience,
She was so charitable and so pitous
She wolde weep if that she saw a mouse
Caught in a trap, if it were dead or bled.
Of smale houndes had she that she fed
With roasted flesh, and milk, and wastel bread;
But sore wept she if one of them were dead,
Or if men smote it with a yerde[11] smart:
And all was conscience and tender heart.
Full seemely her wimple ypinched was;
Her nose tretis,[12] her eyen grey as glass;

[1] That is, Saint Eloy or Eligius. *Oathe* here, according to Mr. Guest is the old genitive plural (originally *atha*), meaning *of oaths*.
[2] Called. [3] Neatly. [4] Unknown.
[5] Pleasure. [6] Smallest spot. [7] Reached.
[8] Surely. [9] Took pains.
[10] Worthy. [11] Yard, rod. [12] Long and well proportioned.

Her mouth full small, and thereto[1] soft and red,
But sickerly she had a fair forehead;
It was almost a spanne broad, I trow;
For hardily[2] she was not undergrow.[3]
Full fetise[4] was her cloak, as I was ware.
Of smale coral about her arm she bare
A pair of beades gauded all with green;[5]
And thereon heng[6] a brooch of gold full sheen,
On which was first ywritten a crowned A,
And after, *Amor vincit omnia.*

As a companion to this perfect full length, we will add that of the Mendicant Friar:—

A Frere there was, a wanton and a merry,
A limitour,[7] a full solemne man;
In all the orders four is none that can
So much of dalliance and fair langage.
He had ymade full many a marriage
Of younge women at his owen cost;
Until[8] his order he was a noble post.
Full well beloved and familier was he
With franklins[9] over all in his countree,
And eke with worthy women of the town;
For he had power of confessioun,
As said him selfe, more than a curat,
For of his order he was a licenciat.
Full sweetly hearde he confession,
And pleasant was his absolution.
He was an easy man to give penance
There as he wist to han a good pitance;[10]
For unto a poor order for to give
Is signe that a man is well yshrive;[11]
For, if he gave, he durste make avant,[12]
He wiste that a man was repentant;
For many a man so hard is of his heart
He may not weep although him sore smart;
Therefore, instead of weeping and prayeres,
Men mote give silver to the poore freres.
His tippet was aye farsed[13] full of knives
And pinnes for to given faire wives:
And certainly he had a merry note;
Well could he sing and playen on a rote.[14]
Of yeddings[15] he bare utterly the pris.[16]
His neck was white as is the flower de lis;[17]

[1] In addition to that. [2] Certainly. [3] Undergrown, of a low stature.
[4] Neat. [5] Having the gauds or beads coloured green.
[6] Hung. [7] A friar licensed to beg within a certain district.
[8] Unto. [9] Freeholders of the superior class.
[10] Where he knew he should have a good pittance or fee.
[11] Shriven. [12] Boast. [13] Stuffed.
[14] A musical instrument so called. [15] Stories, romances. [16] Prize.
[17] Fleur de lis, lily.

Thereto he strong was as a champioun,
And knew well the taverns in every town,
And every hosteler and gay tapstere,
Better than a lazar or a beggere;
For unto swich [1] a worthy man as he
Accordeth nought [2] as, [3] by his facultee, [4]
To haven with sick lazars acquaintance;
It is not honest, it may not avance, [5]
As [6] for to dealen with no swich poorail [7]
But all with rich and sellers of vitail. [8]
And, over [9] all, there as [10] profit should arise,
Curteis [11] he was, and lowly of service;
There n'as no man no where so virtuous;
He was the best beggar in all his house;
And gave a certain ferme [12] for the grant
None of his brethren came in his haunt;
For, though a widow hadde but a shoe,
So pleasant was his *In principio*,
Yet would he have a ferthing or he went;
His purchase [13] was well better than his rent.
And rage he could as it had been a whelp:
In lovedays [14] there could he mochel [15] help;
For there was he nat [16] like a cloisterere
With threadbare cope, as is a poor scholere;
But he was like a maister or a pope:
Of double worsted was his semi-cope,
That round was as a bell out of the press. [17]
Somewhat he lisped for his wantonness,
To make his English sweet upon his tongue;
And in his harping, when that he had sung,
His eyen twinkled in his head aright,
As don the sterres [18] in a frosty night.
This worthy limitour, was clep'd Huberd.

It may be observed in all these extracts how fond Chaucer is of as it were welding one couplet and one paragraph to another, by allowing the sense to flow on from the last line of the one through the first of the other, thus producing an alternating movement of the sense and the sound, instead of making the one accompany the other, as is the general

[1] Such. [2] It suits not, is not fitting.
[3] *As* in this and in other forms seems to have the effect of merely generalizing or giving indefiniteness to the expression.
[4] Having regard to his quality or functions? [5] Profit.
[6] As in the fourth line preceding. [7] Poor people.
[8] Victual. [9] In addition to. [10] Wherever. [11] Courteous.
[12] Farm. [13] What he got by begging and the exercise of his profession.
[14] Days formerly appointed for the amicable settlement of differences.
[15] Much. [16] Not.
[17] Not understood. It is the bell or the semicope that is described as *out of the press?* [18] As do the stars.

practice of our modern poetry. This has been noticed, and a less obvious part of the effect pointed out, by a poet of our own day, who has shown how well he felt Chaucer by something more and much better than criticism. "Chaucer," observes Leigh Hunt, "took the custom from the French poets, who have retained it to this day. It surely has a fine air, both of conclusion and resumption; as though it would leave off when it thought proper, knowing how well it could recommence."* It is so favourite a usage with Chaucer, that it may be sometimes made available to settle the reading, or at least the pointing and sense of a doubtful passage. And it is also common with his contemporary Gower.

The following is the first introduction to the reader of Emily, the heroine of the Knight's Tale of Palamon and Arcite:—

Thus passeth year by year, and day by day,
Till it fell ones in a morrow of May
That Emily, that fairer was to seen
Than is the lilly upon his stalke green,
And fresher than the May with floures new
(For with the rose colour strof[1] her hue;
I n'ot[2] which was the finer of them two)
Ere it was day, as she was wont to do,
She was arisen and all ready dight,
For May wol have no slogardy[3] a night;
The season pricketh every gentle heart,
And maketh him out of his sleep to start,
And saith, Arise, and do thine observance.
This maketh Emily han[4] remembrance
To don honour to May, and for to rise.
Yclothed was she fresh for to devise:[5]
Her yellow hair was broided[6] in a tress
Behind her back, a yerde long I guess;
And in the garden as the sun uprist[7]
She walketh up and down where as her list:[8]
She gathereth floures partie[9] white and red
To make a sotel[10] gerlond[11] for her head:
And as an angel heavenlich she sung.

* Preface to Poetical Works, 8vo. Lon. 1832. See also Mr. Hunt's fine imitation and continuation of the Squire's Tale in the Fourth Number of the Liberal. Lon. 1823.

[1] Strove. [2] Wot not, know not. [3] Sloth.
[4] Have. [5] With exactness (*point devise*). [6] Braided.
[7] Uprises. [8] Where it pleaseth her. [9] Mixed of.
[10] Subtle, artfully contrived. [11] Garland.

Of the many other noble passages in this Tale we can only present a portion of the description of the Temple of Mars:—

Why should I not as well eke tell you all
The portraiture that was upon the wall
Within the temple of mighty Mars the Red?
All painted was the wall in length and bred[1]
Like to the estres[2] of the grisley place
That hight[3] the great Temple of Mars in Trace,[4]
In thilke[5] cold and frosty region
There as Mars hath his sovereign mansion.
First on the wall was painted a forest,
In which there wonneth[6] neither man ne beast;
With knotty knarry barren trees old,
Of stubbes sharp and hidous to behold,
In which there ran a rumble and a swough,[7]
As though a storm should bresten[8] every bough;
And downward from an hill under a bent[9]
There stood the Temple of Mars Armipotent,
Wrought all of burned[10] steel, of which the entree
Was long, and strait, and ghastly for to see;
And thereout came a rage and swich a vise[11]
That it made all the gates for to rise.
The northern light in at the dore shone;
For window on the wall ne was there none
Through which men mighten any light discern.
The door was all of athamant[12] etern,
Yclenched overthwart and endelong[13]
With iron tough, and, for to make it strong,
Every pillar the temple to sustene
Was tonne-great,[14] of iron bright and shene.
There saw I first the dark imagining
Of Felony, and all the compassing;
The cruel Ire, red as any gled;[15]
The Picke-purse, and eke the pale Dread;
The Smiler with the knife under the cloak;
The shepen[16] brenning[17] with the blake smoke;
The treason of the murdering in the bed;
The open wer,[18] with woundes all bebled;
Contek[19] with bloody knife and sharp menace;
All full of chirking[20] was that sorry place.
The sleer[21] of himself yet saw I there;
His hearte-blood hath bathed all his hair;

[1] Breadth. [2] The interior. [3] Is called. [4] Thrace.
[5] That same. [6] Dwelleth.
[7] A long sighing noise, such as in Scotland is called a *sugh*.
[8] Was going to break. [9] A declivity. [10] Burnished.
[11] A violent blast? [12] Adamant.
[13] Across and lengthways. [14] Of the circumference of a tun.
[15] Burning coal. [16] Stable. [17] Burning. [18] War.
[19] Contention. [20] Disagreeable sound. [21] Slayer.

The nail ydriven in the shod[1] on hight;
The colde death, with mouth gaping upright.
Amiddes of the Temple sat Mischance,
With discomfort and sorry countenance:
Yet saw I Woodness[2] laughing in his rage,
Armed Complaint, Outhees,[3] and fierce Outrage;
The carrain[4] in the bush, with throat ycorven;[5]
A thousand slain, and not of qualm ystorven;[6]
The tyrant, with the prey by force yraft;[7]
The town destroyed;—there was nothing laft.[8]

. . . . . .

The statue of Mars upon a carte[9] stood
Armed, and looked grim as he were wood;[10]
And over his head there shinen two figures
Of sterres, that been cleped in scriptures[11]
That one Puella, that other Rubeus.
This God of Armes was arrayed thus:
A wolf there stood beforn him at his feet
With eyen red, and of a man he eat.

Chaucer's merriment, at once hearty and sly, has of course the freedom and unscrupulousness of his time; and much of the best of it cannot be produced in our day without offence to our greater sensitiveness, at least in the matter of expression. Besides, humour in poetry, or any other kind of writing, can least of all qualities be effectively exemplified in extract: its subtle life, dependent upon the thousand minutiæ of place and connection, perishes under the process of excision; it is to attempt to exhibit, not the building by the brick, but the living man by a "pound of his fair flesh." We will venture, however, to give one or two short passages. Nothing is more admirable in the Canterbury Tales than the manner in which the character of the Host is sustained throughout. He is the moving spirit of the poem from first to last. Here is his first introduction to us presiding over the company at supper in his own

gentle hostelry,
That highte the Tabard faste by the Bell,

in Southwark on the evening before they set out on their pilgrimage:—

[1] Hair of the head. [2] Madness. [3] Outcry.
[4] Carrion. [5] Cut. [6] Dead (starved).
[7] Reft. [8] Left. [9] Car, chariot. [10] Mad.
[11] Stars that are called in books.

Great cheere made our Host us everich one,
And to the supper set he us anon,
And served us with vitail of the best;
Strong was the wine, and well to drink us lest.[1]
A seemly man our Hoste was with all
For to han been a marshal in an hall;
A large man he was, with eyen steep;
A fairer burgess is there none in Cheap;
Bold of his speech, and wise, and well ytaught,
And of manhood ylaked[2] right him naught:
Eke thereto[3] was he a right merry man;
And after supper playen he began,
And spake of mirth amonges other things,
When that we hadden made our reckonings,
And said thus: Now, Lordings, trûely
Ye been to me welcome right heartily;
For, by my troth, if that I shall not lie,
I saw nat this yer swich[4] a company
At ones in this herberwe[5] as is now;
Fain would I do you mirth an I wist how;
And of a mirth I am right now bethought
To don you ease, and it shall cost you nought.
Ye gon to Canterbury; God you speed,
The blissful martyr quite you your meed:
And well I wot as ye gon by the way
Ye shapen[6] you to talken and to play;
For trûely comfort ne mirth is none
To riden by the way dumb as the stone;
And therefore would I maken you disport,
As I said erst, and don you some comfort.
And if you liketh all by one assent
Now for to stonden[7] at my judgement,
And for to werchen[8] as I shall you say
To morrow, when ye riden on the way,
Now, by my fader's soule that is dead,
But ye be merry[9] smiteth[10] off my head:
Hold up your hondes withouten more speech.

They all gladly assent; upon which mine Host proposes further that each of them (they were twenty-nine in all, besides himself) should tell two stories in going, and two more in returning, and that, when they got back to the Tabard, the one who had told the "tales of best sentence and most solace" should have a supper at the charge of the rest. And, adds the eloquent, sagacious, and large-hearted projector of the scheme,

[1] It pleased us. [2] Lacked. [3] In addition, besides, also.
[4] Such. [5] Inn. [6] Prepare yourselves, intend.
[7] Stand. [8] Work, do. [9] If ye shall not be merry.
[10] Smite. The imperative has generally this termination.

—for to make you the more merry
I woll my selven gladly with you ride
Right at mine owen cost, and be your guide.
And who that woll my judgement withsay[1]
Shall pay for all we spenden by the way.

Great as the extent of the poem is, therefore, what has been executed, or been preserved, is only a small part of the design; for this liberal plan would have afforded us no fewer than a hundred and twenty tales. Nothing can be better than the triumphant way in which mine Host of the Tabard is made to go through the duties of his self-assumed post;—his promptitude, his decision upon all emergencies, and at the same time his good feeling never at fault any more than his good sense, his inexhaustible and unflagging fun and spirit, and the all-accommodating humour and perfect sympathy with which, without for a moment stooping from his own frank and manly character, he bears himself to every individual of the varied cavalcade. He proposes that they should draw cuts to decide who was to begin; and with how genuine a courtesy, at once encouraging and reverential, he first addresses himself to the modest Clerk, and the gentle Lady Prioress, and the Knight, who also was "of his port as meek as is a maid:"—

Sir Knight, quod he, my maister and my lord,
Now draweth cut, for that is mine accord.
Cometh near, quod he, my Lady Prioress;
And ye, Sir Clerk, let be your shamefastness,
Ne studieth nought; lay hand to, every man.

But for personages of another order, again, he is another man, giving and taking jibe and jeer with the hardest and boldest in their own style and humour, only more nimbly and happily than any of them, and without ever compromising his dignity. And all the while his kindness of heart, simple and quick, and yet considerate, is as conspicuous as the cordial appreciation and delight with which he enters into the spirit of what is going forward, and enjoys the success of his scheme. For example,—

[1] Resist, oppose, withstand.

When that the Knight had thus his tale told,
In all the company n'as there young ne old
That he ne said it was a noble storie,
And worthy to be drawen to memorie,[1]
And namely[2] the gentles everich one.
Our Hoste lough[3] and swore, So mote I gone,[4]
This goth aright; unbokeled is the male;[5]
Let see now who shall tell another tale,
For trüely this game is well begonne:
Now telleth ye, Sir Monk, if that ye conne,[6]
Somewhat to quiten with[7] the Knighte's tale.
The Miller, that for-dronken[8] was all pale,
So that unneaths[9] upon his horse he sat,
He n'old avalen[10] neither hood ne hat,
Ne abiden[11] no man for his courtesy,
But in Pilate's voice[12] he gan to cry,
And swore, By armes, and hy blood and bones,
I can[13] a noble tale for the nones,[14]
With which I wol now quite the Knightes tale.
Our Hoste saw that he was dronken of ale,
And said, Abide, Robin, my leve[15] brother;
Some better man shall tell us first another;
Abide and let us werken[16] thriftily.
By Goddes soul, quod he, that woll not I,
For I woll speak, or elles go my way.
Our Host answered, Tell on a devil way;
Thou art a fool; thy wit is overcome.
Now, hearkeneth, quod the Miller, all and some;
But first I make a protestatioun
That I am drunk, I know it hy my soun,
And therefore, if that I misspeak or say,
Wite it[17] the ale of Southwark, I you pray.

The Miller is at last allowed to tell his tale—which is more accordant with his character, and the condition he was in, than with either good morals or good manners;—as the poet observes:—

What should I more say, but this Millere
He n'old his wordes for no man forbere,
But told his cherle's[18] tale in his manere:
Methinketh that I shall rehearse it here:

[1] Probably pronounced *stō-ri-e* and *me-mō-ri-e*. [2] Especially.
[3] Laughed. [4] So may I fare well. [5] Unbuckled is the budget.
[6] Can. [7] To requite. [8] Very drunk.
[9] With difficulty. [10] Would not doff or lower. [11] Stop for.
[12] "In such a voice as Pilate was used to speak with in the Mysteries. Pilate, being an odious character, was probably represented as speaking with a harsh disagreeable voice."—*Tyrwhitt.*
[13] Know. [14] For the nonce, for the occasion. [15] Dear.
[16] Go to work. [17] Lay the blame of it on.
[18] Churl's.

And therefore every gentle wight I pray
For Goddes love, as deem not that I say,
Of evil intent, but that I mote rehearse
Their tales all, al be they better or werse,
Or elles falsen some of my matere:
And, therefore, whoso list it not to hear,
Turn over the leaf, and chese[1] another tale;
For he shall find enow, both great and smale,
Of storial thing that toucheth gentiless,
And eke morality and holiness.

The Miller's Tale is capped by another in the same style from his fellow "churl" the Reve (or Bailiff)—who before he begins, however, avails himself of the privilege of his advanced years to prelude away for some time in a preaching strain, till his eloquence is suddenly cut short by the voice of authority:—

When that our Host had heard this sermoning,
He gan to speak as lordly as a king.
And saide, What amounteth all this wit?
What, shall we speak all day of holy writ?
The devil made a Reve for to preach,
Or of a souter[2] a shipman or a leech.[3]
Say forth thy tale, and tarry not the time:
Lo Depeford,[4] and it is half way prime;[5]
Lo Greenewich, there many a shrew is in:[6]
It were all time thy Tale to begin.

The last specimen we shall give of "our Host" shall be from the Clerk's Prologue:—

Sir Clerk of Oxenford, our Hoste said,
Ye ride as still and coy as doth a maid
Were newe spoused, sitting at the board;
This day ne heard I of your tongue a word.
I trow ye study abouten some sophime,[7]
But Salomon saith that every thing hath time.
For Godde's sake as beth[8] of better cheer;
It is no time for to studien here.
Tell us some merry tale by your fay;[9]
For what man that is entered in a play
He needes must unto the play assent.
But preacheth not, as freres don in Lent,
To make us for our olde sinnes weep,
Ne that thy tale make us not to sleep.
Tell us some merry thing of aventures;

[1] Choose. [2] Cobbler. [3] Physician. [4] Deptford.
[5] Tyrwhitt supposes this means half-past seven in the morning.
[6] In which (wherein) is many a shrew.
[7] Sophism, perhaps generally for a logical argument.
[8] Be. [9] Faith.

Your terms, your coloures, and your figures,
Keep them in store till so be ye indite
High style, as when that men to kinges write
Speaketh so plain at this time, I you pray,
That we may understonden what ye say.
This worthy Clerk benignely answerd;
Hoste, quod he, I am under your yerde;
Ye have of us as now the governance,
And therefore would I do you obeisance,
As fer as reason asketh hardily.[1]
I wol you tell a tale which that I
Learned at Padow of a worthy clerk,
As preved[2] by his wordes and his werk:
He is now dead and nailed in his chest;
I pray to God so yeve his soule rest.
Francis Petrarch, the laureat poete
Highte this clerk, whose rhethoricke sweet
Enlumined all Itaille of poetry,
As Linian[3] did of philosophy,
Or law, or other art particulere;
But death, that wol not suffre us dwellen here
But as it were a twinkling of an eye,
Them both hath slain, and alle we shall die.

And our last specimen of the Canterbury Tales, and also of Chaucer, being a passage exhibiting that power of pathos in the delicacy as well as in the depth of which he is unrivalled, shall be taken from this tale told by the Clerk, the exquisite tale of Griselda. Her husband has carried his trial of her submission and endurance to the last point by informing her that she must return to her father, and that his new wife is "coming by the way:"—

And she again answerd in patience:
My lord, quod she, I wot, and wist alway,
How that betwixen your magnificence
And my povert no wight ne can ne may
Maken comparison: it is no nay:
I ne held me never digne[4] in no manere
To be your wife, ne yet your chamberere.[5]

And in this house there[6] ye me lady made
(The highe God take I for my witness,
And all so wisly[7] he my soule glade)
I never held me lady ne maistress,
But humble servant to your worthiness,
And ever shall, while that my life may dure,
Aboven every worldly crëature.

[1] Surely. [2] Proved.
[3] A great lawyer of the fourteenth century.
[4] Worthy. [5] Chambermaid. [6] Where. [7] Surely

That ye so long, of your benignity,
Han[1] holden me in honour and nobley,[2]
Whereas[3] I was not worthy for to be,
That thank I God and you, to whom I pray
Foryeld[4] it you: there is no more to say.
Unto my fader gladly wol I wend,
And with him dwell unto my lives end.

. . . . . .

God shielde swich a lordes wife to take
Another man to husband or to make.[5]

And of your newe wife God of his grace
So grant you weale and prosperity;
For I wol gladly yielden her my place,
In which that I was blissful wont to be:
For, sith it liketh you, my lord, quod she,
That whilome weren all my heartes rest,
That I shall gon, I wol go where you list.

But, thereas[6] ye me profer swich dowair[7]
As I first brought, it is well in my mind
It were my wretched clothes, nothing fair,
The which to me were hard now for to find.
O goode God! how gentle and how kind
Ye seemed by your speech and your visage
The day that maked was our marriage!

But sooth is said, algate[8] I find it true,
For in effect it preved[9] is on me,
Love is not old as when that it is new.
But certes, Lord, for non adversity[10]
To dien in this case, it shall not be
That ever in word or werk I shall repent
That I you yave mine heart in whole intent.

My lord, ye wot that in my fader's place
Ye did me strip out of my poore weed,
And richely ye clad me of your grace:
To you brought I nought elles, out of drede,[11]
But faith, and nakedness, and maidenhede:
And here again your clothing I restore,
And eke your wedding ring, for evermore.

The remnant of your jewels ready be
Within your chamber, I dare it safely sayn.
Naked out of my fader's house, quod she,
I came, and naked I mote turn again.
All your pleasance wold I follow fain:
But yet I hope it be not your intent
That I smockless out of your palace went.

[1] Have. [2] Nobility. [3] Where. [4] Repay.
[5] Mate. [6] Whereas. [7] Such dower.
[8] In every way. [9] Proved.
[10] For no unhappiness that may be my lot, were it even to die?
[11] Doubt.

. . . . . .
Let me not like a worm go by the way:
Remember you, mine owen lord so dear,
I was your wife, though I unworthy were.

. . . . . .
The smock, quod he, that thou hast on thy bake
Let it be still, and bear it forth with thee.
But well unneathes[1] thilke[2] word he spake,
But went his way for ruth and for pitee.
Before the folk herselven strippeth she,
And in her smock, with foot and head all bare,
Toward her father's house forth is she fare.[3]

The folk her followen weeping in her way,
And Fortune aye they cursen as they gone:
But she fro weeping kept her eyen drey,[4]
Ne in this time word ne spake she none.
Her fader, that this tiding heard anon,
Curseth the day and time that nature
Shope him[5] to been a lives[6] creature.

There is scarcely perhaps to be found anywhere in poetry a finer burst of natural feeling than in the lines we have printed in italics.

JOHN GOWER.

Contemporary with Chaucer, and probably born a few years earlier, though of the two he survived to the latest date, for his death did not take place till the year 1408, was John Gower. Moral Gower, as he is commonly designated, is the author of three great poetical works (sometimes spoken of as one, though they do not seem to have had any connection of plan or subject):—the Speculum Meditantis, which is, or was, in French; the Vox Clamantis, which is in Latin; and the Confessio Amantis, which is in English. But the first, although an account of it, founded on a mistake, has been given by Warton, has certainly not been seen in modern times, and has in all probability perished. The Vox Clamantis was edited for the Roxburghe Club in 1850 by the Rev. H. G. Coxe. It consists of seven Books in Latin elegiacs. "The greater bulk of the work," says Dr. Pauli,

1 With great difficulty. 2 This same. 3 Gone.
4 Dry. 5 Formed. 6 Living.

"the date of which its editor is inclined to fix between 1382 and 1384, is rather a moral than an historical essay; but the First Book describes the insurrection of Wat Tyler in an allegorical disguise; the poet having a dream on the 11th of June 1381, in which men assumed the shape of animals. The Second Book contains a long sermon on fatalism, in which the poet shows himself no friend to Wiclif's tenets, but a zealous advocate for the reformation of the clergy. The Third Book points out how all orders of society must suffer for their own vices and demerits; in illustration of which he cites the example of the secular clergy. The Fourth Book is dedicated to the cloistered clergy and the friars, the Fifth to the military; the Sixth contains a violent attack on the lawyers; and the Seventh subjoins the moral of the whole, represented in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, as interpreted by Daniel."* The allusion in the title seems to be to St. John the Baptist, and to the general clamour then abroad in the country. The Confessio Amantis has been several times printed;—by Caxton in 1483, by Berthelet in 1532 and again in 1554; and by Alexander Chalmers in the second volume of his English poets, 1810; but all these previous editions have been superseded by the very commodious and beautiful one of Dr. Reinhold Pauli, in 3 vols. 8vo., London, 1857.

We will avail ourselves of Dr. Pauli's account of the course in which the work proceeds:—"The poem opens by introducing the author himself, in the character of an unhappy lover in despair. Venus appears to him, and, after having heard his prayer, appoints her priest called Genius, like the mystagogue in the picture of Cebes, to hear the lover's confession. This is the frame of the whole work, which is a singular mixture of classical notions, principally borrowed from Ovid's Ars Amandi, and of the purely mediæval idea, that as a good Catholic the unfortunate lover must state his distress to a father confessor. This is done with great regularity and even pedantry: all the passions of the human heart, which generally stand in the way of love,

* Introd. Essay to Confessio Amantis.

being systematically arranged in the various books and subdivisions of the work. After Genius has fully explained the evil affection, passion, or vice under consideration, the lover confesses on that particular point; and frequently urges his boundless love for an unknown beauty, who treats him cruelly, in a tone of affectation which would appear highly ridiculous in a man of more than sixty years of age, were it not a common characteristic of the poetry of the period. After this profession the confessor opposes him, and exemplifies the fatal effects of each passion by a variety of opposite stories, gathered from many sources, examples being then, as now, a favourite mode of inculcating instruction and reformation. At length, after a frequent and tedious recurrence of the same process, the confession is terminated by some final injunctions of the priest—the lover's petition in a strophic poem addressed to Venus—the bitter judgment of the goddess, that he should remember his old age and leave off such fooleries . . . . his cure from the wound caused by the dart of love, and his absolution, received as if by a pious Roman Catholic."*

Such a scheme as this, pursued through more than thirty thousand verses, promises perhaps more edification than entertainment; but the amount of either that is to be got out of the Confessio Amantis is not considerable. Ellis, after charitably declaring that so long as Moral Gower keeps to his morality he is "wise, impressive, and sometimes almost sublime," is compelled to add, "But his narrative is often quite petrifying; and, when we read in his work the tales with which we had been familiarized in the poems of Ovid, we feel a mixture of surprise and despair at the perverse industry employed in removing every detail on which the imagination had been accustomed to fasten. The author of the Metamorphoses was a poet, and at least sufficiently fond of ornament; Gower considers him as a mere annalist; scrupulously preserves his facts; relates them with great perspicuity; and is fully satisfied when he has extracted from

* Introductory Essay, p. xxxiv.

them as much morality as they can be reasonably expected to furnish."* In many cases this must be little enough.

Barbour.

This latter part of the fourteenth century is also the age of the birth of Scottish poetry; and Chaucer had in that dialect a far more worthy contemporary and rival than his friend and fellow-Englishman Gower, in John Barbour. Of Barbour's personal history but little is known. He was a churchman, and had attained to the dignity of Archdeacon of Aberdeen by the year 1357; so that his birth cannot well be supposed to have been later than 1320. He is styled Archdeacon of Aberdeen in a passport granted to him in that year by Edward III. at the request of David de Bruce (that is, King David II. of Scotland), to come into England with three scholars in his company, for the purpose, as it is expressed, of studying in the University of Oxford; and the protection is extended to him and his companions while performing their scholastic exercises, and generally while remaining there, and also while returning to their own country. It may seem strange that an Archdeacon should go to college; but Oxford appears to have been not the only seat of learning to which Barbour resorted late in life with the same object. Three other passports, or safe-conducts, are extant which were granted to him by Edward at later dates:—the first, in 1364, permitting him to come, with four horsemen, from Scotland, by land or sea, into England, to study at Oxford, or elsewhere, as he might think proper; the second, in 1365, by which he is authorized to come into England, and travel throughout that kingdom, with six horsemen as his companions, as far as to St. Denis in France; and the third, in 1368, securing him protection in coming, with two valets and two horses, into England, and travelling through the same to the king's other dominions, on his way to France *(versus Franciam)* for the purpose of studying there, and in returning thence. Yet he had also

* Specimens of the Early English Poets, I. 179.

been long before this employed, and in a high capacity, in civil affairs. In 1357 he was appointed by the Bishop of Aberdeen as one of his two Commissioners deputed to attend a meeting at Edinburgh about the ransom of the king. Nothing more is heard of him till 1373, in which year he appears as one of the auditors of Exchequer, being styled Archdeacon of Aberdeen, and clerk of probation *(clerico probacionis)* of the royal household. In his later days he appears to have been in the receipt of two royal pensions, both probably bestowed upon him by Robert II., who succeeded David II. in 1370; the first one of 10*l*. Scots from the customs of Aberdeen, the other one of 20*s*. from the *borough mails*, or city rents, of the same town. An entry in the records of Aberdeen for 1471 states on the authority of the original roll, now lost, that the latter was expressly granted to him "for the compilation of the book of the Acts of King Robert the First." In a passage occurring in the latter part of this work, he himself tells us that he was then compiling it in the year 1375. All that is further known of him is, that his death took place towards the close of 1395. Besides his poem commonly called The Bruce, another metrical work of his entitled The Broite or The Brute, being a deduction of the history of the Scottish kings from Brutus, is frequently referred to by the chronicler Wynton in the next age; but no copy of it is now believed to exist. Of the Bruce the first critical edition was that by Pinkerton, published in 3 vols. 8vo. at London in 1790; the last and best, is that by the Rev. Dr. John Jamieson, forming the first volume of The Bruce and Wallace, 2 vols. 4to. Edinburgh, 1820.

The Scotch in which Barbour's poem is written was undoubtedly the language then commonly in use among his countrymen, for whom he wrote and with whom his poem has been a popular favourite ever since its first appearance. By his countrymen, of course, we mean the inhabitants of southern and eastern, or Lowland Scotland, not the Celts or Highlanders, who have always been and still are as entirely

distinct a race as the native Irish are, and always have been, from the English in Ireland, and to confound whom either in language or in any other respect with the Scottish Lowlanders is the same sort of mistake that it would be to speak of the English as being either in language or lineage identical with the Welsh. Indeed, there is a remarkable similarity as to this matter in the circumstances of the three countries: in each a primitive Celtic population, which appears to have formerly occupied the whole soil, has been partially expelled by another race, but still exists, inhabiting its separate locality (in all the three cases the maritime and mountainous wilds of the west), and retaining its own ancient and perfectly distinct language. The expulsion has been the most sweeping in England, where it took place first, and where the Welsh form now only about a sixteenth of the general population; it has been carried to a less extent in Scotland, where it was not effected till a later age, and where the numbers of the Highlanders are still to those of the Lowlanders in the proportion of one to five or six; in Ireland, where it happened last of all, the new settlers have scarcely yet ceased to be regarded as foreigners and intruders, and the ancient Celtic inhabitants, still covering, although not possessing, by far the greater part of the soil, the larger proportion of them, however, having relinquished their ancestral speech, continue to be perhaps six or eight times as numerous as the Saxons or English. For in all the three cases it is the same Saxon, or at least Teutonic, race before which the Celts have retired or given way: the Welsh, the Scottish Highlanders, and the native Irish, indeed, all to this day alike designate the stranger who has set himself down beside them by the common epithet of the Saxon. We know that other Teutonic or northern races were mixed with the Angles and Saxons in all the three cases: not only were the English, who settled in Scotland in great numbers, and conquered Ireland, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, in part French Normans, but the original Normans or Danes had in the eighth and ninth centuries.

effected extensive settlements in each of the three countries. Besides, the original English were themselves a mixed people; and those of them who were distinctly Saxons were even the old hereditary enemies of the Danes. Still, as the Saxons, Angles, and Jutes were as one people against the Scandinavian Danes, or their descendants the French Normans, so even Saxons and Danes, or Normans, were united everywhere against the Celts. As for the language spoken by the Lowland Scots in the time of Barbour, it must have sprung out of the same sources, and been affected by nearly the same influences, with the English of the same age. Nobody now holds that any part of it can have been derived from the Picts, who indeed, originally occupied part of the Lowlands of Scotland, but who were certainly not a Teutonic but a Celtic people. Lothian, or all the eastern part of Scotland to the south of the Forth, was English from the seventh century, as much as was Northumberland or Yorkshire: from this date the only difference that could have distinguished the language there used from that spoken in the south of England was probably a larger infusion of the Danish forms; but this characteristic must have been shared in nearly the same degree by all the English then spoken to the north of the Thames. Again, whatever effect may have been produced by the Norman Conquest, and the events consequent upon that revolution, would probably be pretty equally diffused over the two countries. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries both the Normans themselves and their literature appear to have acquired almost the same establishment and ascendancy in Scotland as in England. French was the language of the court in the one country as well as in the other, and Scottish as well as English writers are found figuring among the imitators of the Norman trouveurs and romance poets. Afterwards the connexion of Scotland with France became much more intimate and uninterrupted than that of England; and this appears to have affected the Scottish dialect in a way which will be presently noticed. But in Barbour's day, the language of Teutonic

Scotland was distinguished from that of the south of England (which had now acquired the ascendancy over that of the northern counties as the literary dialect), by little more than the retention, perhaps, of a good many vocables which had become obsolete among the English, and a generally broader enunciation of the vowel sounds. Hence Barbour never supposes that he is writing in any other language than English any more than Chaucer; that is the name by which not only he, but his successors Dunbar and even Lyndsay, always designate their native tongue: down to the latter part of the sixteenth century, by the term *Scotch* was generally understood what is now called the *Gaelic*, or the *Erse* or *Ersh* (that is, Irish), the speech of the Celts or Highlanders. Divested of the grotesque and cumbrous spelling of the old manuscripts, the language of Barbour is quite as intelligible at the present day to an English reader as that of Chaucer; the obsolete words and forms are not more numerous in the one writer than in the other, though some that are used by Barbour may not be found in Chaucer, as many of Chaucer's are not in Barbour; the chief general distinction, as we have said, is the greater breadth given to the vowel sounds in the dialect of the Scottish poet. The old termination of the present participle in *and* is also more frequently used than in Chaucer, to whom however it is not unknown, any more than its modern substitute *ing* is to Barbour. The most remarkable peculiarity of the more recent form of the Scottish dialect that is not found in Barbour is the abstraction of the final *l* from syllables ending in that consonant preceded by a vowel or diphthong: thus he never has *a'*, *fa'*, *fu'* or *fou'*, *pow*, *how*, for *all*, *fall*, *full*, *poll*, *hole*, &c. The subsequent introduction of this habit into the speech of the Scotch is perhaps to be attributed to their imitation of the liquefaction of the *l* in similar circumstances by the French, from whom they have also borrowed a considerable number of their modern vocables, never used in England, and to whose accentuation, both of individual words and of sentences, theirs has much general re-

semblance, throwing the emphasis, contrary, as already noticed, to the tendency of the English language, upon one of the latter syllables, and also running into the rising in many cases where the English use the falling intonation.

The Bruce is a very long poem, comprising between twelve and thirteen thousand lines, in octosyllabic metre, which the two last editors have distributed, Pinkerton into twenty, Jamieson into fourteen, Books. It relates the history of Scotland, and especially the fortunes of the great Bruce, from the death of Alexander III. in 1286, or rather, from the competition for the crown, and the announcement of the claims of Edward I. as lord paramount, on that of his daughter, Margaret the Maiden of Norway, in 1290—the events of the first fifteen or sixteen years, however, before Bruce comes upon the stage, being very succinctly given—to the death of Bruce, (Robert I.) in 1329, and that of his constant associate and brother of chivalry, Lord James Douglas, the bearer of the king's heart to the Holy Land, in the year following. The 12,500 verses, or thereby, may be said therefore to comprehend the events of about twenty-five years; and Barbour, though he calls his work a "romaunt," as being a narrative poem, professes to relate nothing but what he believed to be the truth, so that he is to be regarded not only as the earliest poet but also as the earliest historian of his country. Fordun, indeed, was his contemporary, but the Latin chronicle of that writer was probably not published till many years after his death. And to a great extent Barbour's work is and has always been regarded as being an authentic historical monument; it has no doubt some incidents or embellishments which may be set down as fabulous; but these are in general very easily distinguished from the main texture of the narrative, which agrees substantially with the most trustworthy accounts drawn from other sources, and has been received and quoted as good evidence by all subsequent writers and investigators of Scottish history, from Andrew of Wynton to Lord Hailes inclusive.

Barbour is far from being a poet equal to Chaucer; but there is no other English poet down to a century and a half after their day who can be placed by the side of the one any more than of the other. He has neither Chaucer's delicate feeling of the beautiful, nor his grand inventive imagination, nor his wit or humour; but in mere narrative and description he is, with his clear, strong, direct diction, in a high degree both animated and picturesque, and his poem is pervaded by a glow of generous sentiment, well befitting its subject, and lending grace as well as additional force to the ardent, bounding spirit of life with which it is instinct from beginning to end. The following passage, which occurs near the commencement, has been often quoted (at least in part); but it is too remarkable to be omitted in any exemplification of the characteristics of Barbour's poetry. He is describing the oppressions endured by the Scots during the occupation of their country by the English king, Edward I., after his deposition of his puppet Baliol:—

And gif that ony man them by
Had ony thing that wes worthy,
As horse, or hund, or other thing,
That war pleasand to their liking!
With right or wrang it wald have they.
And gif ony wald them withsay,
They suld swa do, that they suld tine[1]
Other[2] land or life, or live in pine.
For they dempt[3] them efter their will,
Takand na kepe[4] to right na skill,[5]
Ah! what they dempt them felonly![6]
For gud knightes that war worthy,
For little enchesoun[7] or then[8] nane
They hangit be the neckbane.
Als[9] that folk, that ever was free,
And in freedom wont for to be,
Through their great mischance and folly,
Wor treated then sa wickedly,
That their faes[10] their judges ware:
What wretchedness may man have mair?[11]

[1] Lose. [2] Either. [3] Doomed, judged.
[4] Taking no heed, paying no regard. [5] Reason.
[6] Ah! how cruelly they judged them! [7] Cause.
[8] Both the sense and the metre seem to require that this *then* (in orig. *that*) should be transferred to the next line; "they hangit then."
[9] Also, thus. [10] Foes. [11] More.

Ah! Freedom is a noble thing!
Freedom mays[1] man to have liking;[2]
Freedom all solace to man gives:
He lives at ease that freely lives!
A noble heart may have nane ease,
Ne elles nought that may him please
Giff freedom failye: for free liking
Is yarnit[3] ower[4] all other thing.
Na he that aye has livit free
May nought knaw well the property,[5]
The anger, na the wretched doom,
That is couplit[6] to foul thirldoom.[7]
But gif he had assayit it,
Then all perquer[8] he suld it wit;
And suld think freedom mair to prise
Than all the gold in warld that is.

It is, he goes on to observe, by its contrary, or opposite, that the true nature of everything is best discovered:—the value and blessing of freedom, for example, are only to be fully felt in slavery; and then the worthy archdeacon, who, although the humorous is not his strongest ground, does not want slyness or a sense of the comic, winds up with a very singular illustration, which, however, is more suited to his own age than to ours, and may be suppressed here without injury to the argument.

But Barbour's design, no doubt, was to effect by means of this light and sportive conclusion an easy and harmonious descent from the height of declamation and passion to which he had been carried in the preceding lines. Throughout his long work he shows, for his time, a very remarkable feeling of the *art* of poetry, both by the variety which he studies in the disposition and treatment of his subject, and by the rare temperance and self-restraint which prevents him from ever overdoing what he is about either by prosing or raving. Even his patriotism, warm and steady as it is, is wholly without any vulgar narrowness or ferocity: he paints the injuries of his country with distinctness and force, and celebrates the heroism of her champions and deliverers with all admiration and sympathy; but he never runs into either the

[1] Makes. [2] Pleasure. [3] Yearned for, desired.
[4] Over, above.' [5] The quality, the peculiar state or condition?
[6] Coupled, attached. [7] Thraldom. [8] Exactly.

gasconading exaggerations or the furious depreciatory invectives which would, it might be thought, have better pleased the generality of those for whom he wrote. His understanding was too enlightened, and his heart too large, for that. His poem stands in this respect in striking contrast to that of Harry, the blind minstrel, on the exploits of Wallace, to be afterwards noticed; but each poet suited his hero—Barbour, the magnanimous, considerate, and far-seeing king; Blind Harry, the indomitable popular champion, with his one passion and principle, hatred of the domination of England, occupying his whole soul and being.

Compound English Prose.—Mandevil; Trevisa; Wiclif; Chaucer.

To the fourteenth century belong the earliest specimens of prose composition in our present mixed English that have been preserved.

Our oldest Mixed English prose author is Sir John Mandevil, whose Voyages and Travels, a singular repertory of the marvellous legends of the middle ages, have been often printed. The best editions are that published in 8vo., at London, in 1725, and the reprint of it in the same form in 1839, "with an introduction, additional notes, and a glossary, by J. O. Halliwell, Esq., F.S.A., F.R.A.S." The author's own account of himself and of his book is given in an introductory address, or Prologue:—

And, for als moch as it is long time passed that there was no general passage ne vyage over the sea, and many men desiren for to hear speak of the Holy Lond, and han[1] thereof great solace and comfort, I, John Maundeville, knight, all be it I be not worthy, that was born in Englond, in the town of Saint Albons, passed the sea in the year of our Lord Jesu Christ 1322, in the day of Saint Michel; and hider-to have ben[2] longtime over the sea, and have seen and gone thorough many divers londs, and many provinces, and kingdoms, and isles, and have passed thorough Tartary, Persie, Ermonie[3] the Little and the Great; thorough Libye, Chaldee, and a great part of Ethiop;

[1] Have. [2] Been. [3] Armenia.

thorough Amazoyn, Ind the Lass and the More, a great party; and thorough out many other isles, than ben abouten Ind; where dwellen many divers folks, and of divers manners and laws, and of divers shapps of men. Of which londs and isles I shall speak more plainly hereafter. And I shall devise you some party of things that there ben,[1] whan time shall ben after it may best come to my mind; and specially for hem[2] that will[3] and are in purpose for to visit the Holy City of Jerusalem, and the holy places that are thereabout. And I shall tell the way that they should holden thider. For I have often times passed and ridden the way, with good company of many lords, God be thonked.

And ye shull understond that I have put this book out of Latin into French, translated it agen out of French into English, that every man of my nation may understond it. But lords and knights, and other noble and worthy men, that con[4] Latin but little, and han ben beyond the sea, knowen and understonden gif I err in devising, for forgetting or else; that they mowe[5] redress it and amend it. For things passed out, of long time, from a man's mind, or from his sight, turnen soon into forgetting; because that mind of man ne may not ben comprehended ne withholden for the freelty of mankind.

Mandevil is said to have returned to England in 1356, or after an absence of thirty-four years; and, as he is recorded to have died at Liege in 1371, his book must have been written early in the latter half of the fourteenth century.

The oldest English translation we have of the Bible is that of Wiclif. John de Wiclif, or Wycliffe, died at about the age of sixty in 1384, and his translation of the Scriptures from the Vulgate appears to have been finished two or three years before. The New Testament has been several times printed; first in folio in 1731 under the care of the Rev. John Lewis; next in 4to. in 1810 under that of the Rev. H. H. Baber; lastly in 4to. in 1841, and again in 1846, in Bagster's English Hexapla. And now the Old Testament has also been given to the world from the Clarendon press, at the expense of the University of Oxford, admirably edited by the Rev. J. Forshall and Sir Frederick Madden, in four magnificent quartos, Oxford, 1850. Wiclif is also the author of many original writings in his native language, in defence of his reforming views in theology and church government, some of which have been printed, but most of which that are preserved still remain in manuscript. His style is every-

[1] Be. [2] Them ('em). [3] Wish. [4] Know. [5] May.

where coarse and slovenly, though sometimes animated by a popular force or boldness of expression.

Chaucer is the author of three separate works in prose; a translation of Boethius de Consolatione Philosophiæ, printed by Caxton, in folio, without date, under the title of The Boke of Consolacion of Philosophie, wich that Boecius made for his Comforte and Consolacion; a Treatise on the Astrolabe, addressed to his son Lewis, in 1391, and printed (at least in part) in the earlier editions of his works; and The Testament of Love, an apparent imitation of the treatise of Boethius, written towards the end of his life, and also printed in the old editions of his collected works. But, perhaps, the most highly finished, and in other respects also the most interesting, of the great poet's prose compositions are the Tale of Meliboeus and the Parson's Tale, in the Canterbury Tales. The Parson's Tale, which winds up the Canterbury Tales, as we possess the work, is a long moral discourse, which, for the greater part, is not very entertaining, but which yet contains some passages curiously illustrative of the age in which it was written. Here is part of what occurs in the section headed De Superbia (Of Pride), the first of the seven mortal sins. Tyrwhitt justly recommends that the whole "should be read carefully by any antiquary who may mean to write De re Vestiaria of the English nation in the fourteenth century."

Now ben there two manner of prides: that on of hem[1] is within the heart of a man, and that other is without; of which soothly these foresaid things, and mo[2] than I have said, appertainen to pride that is within the heart of man. And there be other spices[3] that ben withouten; but, natheless, that on of these spices of pride is sign of that other, right as the gay levesell[4] at the tavern is sign of the wine that is in the cellar. And this is in many things, as in speech and countenance, and outrageous array of clothing; for certes if there had ben no sin in clothing Christ wold not so soon have noted and spoken of the clothing of thilk rich man in the Gospel: and, as Saint Gregory saith,

[1] The one of them. [2] More. [3] Species, kinds.

[4] The meaning of this word, which at a later date appears to have been pronounced and written *lessel*, is unknown. See Tyrwhitt's note to Cant. Tales, v. 4059, and Glossary, *ad verbum;* and note by the editor, Mr. Albert Way, on pp. 300, 301, of the Promptorium Parvulorum, vol. I., printed for the Camden Society, 4to. Lond. 1843.

that precious clothing is culpable, for the dearth of it, and for his softness, and for his strangeness and disguising, and for the superfluity or for the inordinate scantiness of it. Alas! may not a man see as in our days the sinful costlew array of clothing, and namely[1] in too much superfluity, or else in too disordinate scantness.

As to the first sin, in superfluity of clothing, which that maketh it so dear, to the harm of the people, not only the cost of the embrouding,[2] the disguising, indenting or barring, ownding,[3] paling,[4] winding, or bending, and semblable waste of cloth in vanity; but there is also the costlew furring in hir gowns, so moch pounsoning[5] of chisel to maken holes, so moch dagging[6] of shears, with the superfluity in length of the foresaid gowns, trailing in the dong and in the mire, on horse and eke on foot, as well of man as of woman, that all thilk training is verily (as in effect) wasted, consumed, threadbare, and rotten with dong, rather than it is yeven to the poor, to great damage of the foresaid poor folk, and that in sondry wise; this is to sayn, the more that cloth is wasted, the more must it cost to the poor people, for the scarceness; and, furthermore, if so be that they wolden yeve swich pounsoned and dagged clothing to the poor people, it is not convenient to wear for hir estate, ne suffisant to bote[7] hir necessity, to keep hem fro the distemperance of the firmament. . . .

Also the sin of ornament or of apparel is in things that appertain to riding, as in too many delicate horse that ben holden for delight, that hen so fair, fat, and costlew; and also in many a vicious knave that is sustained because of hem; in curious harness, as in saddles, croppers, peitrels, and bridles, covered with precious cloth and rich, barred and plated of gold and of silver; for which God saith by Zachary the prophet, I wol confound the riders of swich horse. These folk taken little regard of the riding of God's son of heaven, and of his harness, whan he rode upon the ass, and had none other harness but the poor clothes of his disciples, ne we read not that ever he rode on ony other beast. I speak this for the sin of superfluity, and not for honesty whan reason it requireth. And, moreover, certes pride is greatly notified in holding of great meiny,[8] whan they hen of little profit, or of right no profit, and namely whan that meiny is felonious and damageous to the people by hardiness of high lordship, or by way of office; for certes swich lords sell than hir lordship to the devil of hell, whan they sustain the wickedness of hir meiny; or else whan these folk of low degree, as they that holden hostelries, sustainen theft of hir hostellers, and that is in many manner of deceits; thilk manner of folk ben the flies that followen the honey, or else the hounds that followen the carrain; swich foresaid folk stranglen spiritually hir lordships; for which thus saith David the prophet, Wicked death mot come unto thilk lordships, and God yeve that they mot descend into hell all down, for in hir houses is iniquity and shrewedness, and not God of heaven; and certes, but if they done amendment, right as God yave his henison to Laban by the service of Jacob, and to Pharaoh by the service of Joseph, right so wol God yeve his malison to swich lordships as sustain the wickedness of hir servants, but they come to amendment. Pride of the table appeareth eke full oft; for certes rich men be cleped[9] to feasts, and poor folk be put away and rebuked; and also in excess of divers meats and drinks, and namely swich manner bake meats and dish meats brenning[10] of wild fire, and painted and castled with paper, and semblable waste, so that it is abusion to think; and eke in too great preciousness of vessel, and curiosity of minstrelsy, by which a man is stirred more to the delights of luxury.

1 Especially. 2 Embroidering. 3 Imitating waves. 4 Imitating pales. 5 Punching. 6 Slitting. 7 Help (boot). 8 Body of menials. 9 Called, invited. 10 Burning.

Printing in England.—Caxton.

The art of printing had been practised nearly thirty years in Germany before it was introduced either into England or France—with so tardy a pace did knowledge travel to and fro over the earth in those days, or so unfavourable was the state of these countries for the reception of even the greatest improvements in the arts. At length a citizen of London secured a conspicuous place to his name for ever in the annals of our national literature, by being, so far as is known, the first of his countrymen that learned the new art, and certainly the first who either practised it in England, or in printing an English book. William Caxton was born, as he tells us himself, in the Weald of Kent, it is supposed about the year 1412. Thirty years after this date his name is found among the members of the Mercers' Company in London. Later in life he appears to have repeatedly visited the Low Countries, at first probably on business of his own, but afterwards in a sort of public capacity,—having in 1464 been commissioned, along with another person, apparently also a merchant, by Edward IV. to negotiate a commercial treaty with the Duke of Burgundy. He was afterwards taken into the household of Margaret Duchess of Burgundy. It was probably while resident abroad, in the Low Countries or in Germany, that he commenced practising the art of printing. He is commonly supposed to have completed before the end of the year 1471 impressions of Raoul le Fevre's Recueil des Histoires de Troyes, in folio; of the Latin oration of John Russell on Charles Duke of Burgundy being created a Knight of the Garter, in quarto; and of an English translation by himself of Le Fevre's above-mentioned history, in folio; "whyche sayd translacion and werke," says the title, "was begonne in Brugis in 1468, and ended in the holy cyte of Colen, 19 Sept. 1471." But these words undoubtedly refer only to the translation; and sufficient reasons have lately been advanced by Mr. Knight

for entertaining the strongest doubts of any one of the above-mentioned books having been printed by Caxton.* The earliest work now known, which we have sufficient grounds for believing to have been printed by Caxton, is another English translation by himself, from the French, of a moral treatise entitled The Game and Playe of the Chesse, a folio volume, which is stated to have been "finished the last day of March, 1474." It is generally supposed that this work was printed in England; and the year 1474 accordingly is assumed to have been that of the introduction of the art into this country. It is certainly known that Caxton was resident in England in 1477, and had set up his press in the Almonry, near Westminster Abbey, where he printed that year, in folio, The Dictes and Notable Wyse Sayenges of the Phylosophers, translated from the French by Anthony Woodville, Earl Rivers. From this time Caxton continued both to print and translate with indefatigable industry for about a dozen years, his last publication with a date having been produced in 1490, and his death having probably taken place in 1491, or 1492. Before he died he saw the admirable art which he had introduced into his native country already firmly established there, and the practice of it extensively diffused. Theodore Rood, John Lettow, William Machelina, and Wynkyn de Worde, foreigners, and Thomas Hunt, an Englishman, all printed in London both before and after Caxton's death. It is probable that the foreigners had been his assistants, and were brought into the country by him. A press was also set up at St. Albans by a schoolmaster of that place, whose name has not been preserved; and books began to be printed at Oxford so early as the year 1478.

* See William Caxton, a Biography, 12mo. Lond. 1844, pp. 103, &c. This work has since been expanded into The Old Printer and the Modern Press, 8vo. 1854.

English Chronicles.

The series of our Modern English chronicles may perhaps be most properly considered as commencing with John de Trevisa's translation of Higden, with various additions, which, as already mentioned, was finished in 1387, and was printed, with a continuation to 1460, by Caxton, in 1482. After Trevisa comes John Harding, who belongs to the fifteenth century; his metrical Chronicle of England coming down to the reign of Edward IV.* The metre is melancholy enough; but the part of the work relating to the author's own times is not without value. Harding is chiefly notorious as the author, or at least the collector and producer, of a great number of charters and other documents attesting acts of fealty done by the Scottish to the English kings, which are now generally admitted to be forgeries. Caxton himself must be reckoned our next English chronicler, as the author both of the continuation of Trevisa and also of the concluding part of the volume entitled The Chronicles of England, published by him in 1480,—the body of which is translated from a Latin chronicle by Douglas, a monk of Glastonbury, who lived in the preceding century. Neither of these performances, however, is calculated to add to the fame of the celebrated printer. To this period we may also in part assign the better known Concordance of Histories of Robert Fabyan, citizen and draper of London; though the author only died in 1512, nor was his work printed till a few years later. Fabyan's history, which begins with Brutus and comes down to his own time, is in the greater part merely a translation from the preceding chroniclers; its chief value consists in a number of notices it has preserved relating to the city of London.**

* First printed by Grafton in 1543. The most recent edition is that by Sir H. Ellis, 4to. London. 1812.

** First published in 1516. The last edition is that of Sir H. Ellis, Lond. 4to. 1811.

Bishop Pecock; Fortescue; Malory.

Of the English theological writers of the age immediately following that of Wiclif, the most noteworthy is Reynold Pecock, Bishop of St. Asaph and afterwards of Chichester. As may be inferred from these ecclesiastical dignities, Pecock was no Wiclifite, but a defender of the established system both of doctrine and of church government: he tells us himself, in one of his books, that twenty years of his life had been spent for the greater part in writing against the Lollards. But, whatever effect his arguments may have produced upon those against whom they were directed, they gave little satisfaction to the more zealous spirits on his own side, who probably thought that he was too fond of reasoning with errors demanding punishment by a cautery sharper than that of the pen; and the end was that he was himself, in the year 1457, charged with heresy, and, having been found guilty, was first compelled to read a recantation, and to commit fourteen of his books, with his own hands, to the flames at St. Paul's Cross, and then deprived of his bishopric, and consigned to an imprisonment in which he was allowed the use neither of writing materials nor of books, and in which he is supposed to have died about two years after. One especial heresy alleged to be found in his writings was, that in regard to matters of faith the church was not infallible. Bishop Pecock's Life has been ably and learnedly written by the Rev. John Lewis, to whom we also owe biographies of Wiclif and of Caxton. His numerous treatises are partly in English, partly in Latin. Of those in English the most remarkable is one entitled The Repressor, which he produced in 1449. A short specimen, in which the spelling, but only the spelling, is modernized, will give some notion of his manner of writing, and of the extent to which the language had been adapted to prose eloquence or reasoning of the more formal kind in that age:—

"Say to me, good sir, and answer hereto; when men of the country upland bringen into London in Midsummer eve branches of trees fro Bishop's Wood, and flowers fro the field, and betaken tho[1] to citizens of London for to therewith array her[2] houses, shoulden men of London, receiving and taking tho branches and flowers, say and hold that tho branches grewen out of the carts which broughten hem[3] to London, and that tho carts or the hands of the bringers weren grounds and fundaments of tho branches and flowers? God forbid so little wit be in her heads. Certes, though Christ and his apostles weren now living at London, and would bring, so as is now said, branches from Bishop's Wood, and flowers from the fields, into London, and woulden hem deliver to men, that they make therewith her houses gay, into remembrance of St. John Baptist, and of this that it was prophesied of him, that many shoulden joy of his birth, yet tho men of London, receiving so tho branches and flowers, oughten not say and feel that tho branches and flowers grewen out of Christ's hands. Tho branches grewen out of the boughs upon which they in Bishop's Wood stooden, and tho boughs grewen out of stocks or truncheons, and the truncheons or shafts grewen out of the root, and the root out of the next earth thereto, upon which and in which the root is buried. So that neither the cart, neither the hands of the bringers, neither tho bringers ben the grounds or fundaments of tho branches."

The good bishop, we see, has a popular and lively as well as clear and precise way of putting things. It may be doubted, nevertheless, if his ingenious illustrations would be quite as convincing to the earnest and excited innovators whom they were addressed as they were satisfactory to himself.

Another eminent English prose writer of this date was Sir John Fortescue, who was Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench under Henry VI., and to whom the king is supposed to have also confided the great seal at some time during his expulsion from the throne. Fortescue is the author of various treatises, some in English, some in Latin, most of which, however, still remain in manuscript. One in Latin, which was first sent to press in the reign of Henry VIII., and has been repeatedly reprinted since, is commonly referred to under the title of De Landibus Legum Angliæ. It has also been several times translated into English. This treatise is drawn up in the form of a dialogue between the author and Henry's unfortunate son, Edward Prince of Wales, so barbarously put to death after the battle of Tewkesbury. Fortescue's only English work that has been

[1] Take them, or those. [2] Their. [3] Them.

printed was probably written at a later date, and would appear to have had for its object to secure for him, now that the Lancastrian cause was beaten to the ground, the favour of the Yorkist king, Edward IV. It was first published, in 1714, by Mr. John Fortescue Aland, of the Middle Temple, with the title of The Difference between an Absolute and Limited Monarchy, as it more particularly regards the English Constitution,—which, of course, is modern, but has been generally adopted to designate the work. The following passage (in which the spelling is again reformed) will enable the reader to compare Fortescue as a writer with his contemporary Pecock, and is also curious both for its matter and its spirit:—

And how so be it that the French king reigneth upon his people *dominio regali*, yet St. Lewis, sometime king there, ne any of his predecessors set never tallies ne other impositions upon the people of that land without the consent of the three estates, which, when they may be assembled, are like to the court of Parliament in England. And this order kept many of his successors till late days, that Englishmen kept such a war in France that the three estates durst not come together. And then, for that cause, and for great necessity which the French king had of goods for the defence of that land, he took upon him to set tallies and other impositions upon the commons without the assent of the three estates; but yet he would not set any such charges, nor hath set, upon the nobles, for fear of rebellion. And, because the commons, though they have grudged, have not rebelled, nor be hardy to rebel, the French kings have yearly sithen[1] set such charges upon them, and so augmented the same charges as the same commons be so impoverished and destroyed that they may uneath[2] live. They drink water, they eat apples, with bread, right brown, made of rye. They eat no flesh, but if it be selden[3] a little lard, or of the entrails or heads of beasts slain for the nobles and merchants of the land. They wear no woollen, but if it be a poor coat under their uttermost garment, made of great canvas, and passen not their knee; wherefore they be gartered and their thighs bare. Their wives and children gone barefoot. They may in none otherwise live; for some of them that was wont to pay to his landlord for his tenement which he hireth by the year a scute[4] payeth now to the king, over[5] that scute, five scutes. Where-through they be artied[6] by necessity, so to watch, labour, and grub in the ground for their sustenance, that their nature is much wasted, and the kind of them brought to nought. They gone crooked, and are feeble, not able to fight nor to defend the realm; nor have they weapon, nor money to buy them weapon, withal; but verily they live in the most extreme poverty and misery; and yet they dwell in one of the most fertile realms of the world. Where-through the

[1] Since. [2] Scarcely, with difficulty (uneasily).
[3] Seldom, on rare occasions.
[4] An *escut*, or *écu* (*d'or*), about three shillings and fourpence.
[5] In addition to, over and above. [6] Compelled.

French king hath not men of his own realm able to defend it, except his nobles, which bearen not such impositions, and therefore they are right likely of their bodies; by which cause the king is compelled to make his armies, and retinues for defence of his land, of strangers, as Scots, Spaniards, Aragoners, men of Almayne,[1] and of other nations; else all his enemies might overrun him; for he hath no defence of his own, except his castles and fortresses. Lo! this the fruit of his *jus regale*.

It is in the same spirit that the patriotic chief justice elsewhere boasts, that there were more Englishmen hanged for robbery in one year than Frenchmen in seven, and that "if an Englishman be poor, and see another having riches which may be taken from him by might, he will not spare to do so."

Fortescue was probably born not much more than thirty years after Pecock; but the English of the judge, in vocabulary, in grammatical forms, in the modulation of the sentences, and in its air altogether, might seem to exhibit quite another stage of the language.

Although both Pecock and Fortescue lived to see the great invention of printing, and the latter at any rate survived the introduction of the new art into his native country, no production of either appears to have been given to the world through the press in the lifetime of the writer. Perhaps this was also the case with another prose writer of this date, who is remembered, however, less by his name than by the work of which he is the author, and which still continues to be read, the famous history of King Arthur, commonly known under the name of the Morte Arthur. This work was first printed by Caxton in the year 1485. He tells us in his prologue, or preface, that the copy was given him by Sir Thomas Malory, Knight, who took it, out of certain books in French, and reduced it into English. Malory himself states at the end, that he finished his task in the ninth year of King Edward IV., which would be in 1469 or 1470. The Morte Arthur was several times reprinted in the course of the following century and a half, the latest of the old editions having appeared in a quarto volume in 1634.

[1] Germany.

From this, two reprints were brought out by different London booksellers in the same year, 1816; one in three duodecimos, the other in two. But the standard modern edition is that which appeared in two volumes quarto in the following year, 1817, exactly reprinted from Caxton's original edition, with the title of The Byrth, Lyfe, and Actes of Kyng Arthur; of his noble Knyghtes of the Rounde Table, &c., with an Introduction and Notes, by Robert Southey. Malory, whoever he may have been (Leland says he was Welsh), and supposing him to have been in the main only a translator, must be admitted to show considerable mastery of expression; his English is always animated and flowing, and, in its earnestness and tenderness, occasionally rises to no common beauty and eloquence. The concluding chapters in particular have been much admired. We extract a few sentences:—

Then Sir Lancelot, ever after, eat but little meat, nor drank, but continually mourned until he was dead; and then he sickened more and more, and dried and dwindled away. For the bishop, nor none of his fellows, might not make him to eat, and little he drank, that he was soon waxed shorter by a cubit than he was, that the people could not know him. For evermore day and night he prayed [taking no rest], but needfully as nature required; sometimes he slumbered a broken sleep; and always he was lying grovelling upon King Arthur's and Queen Guenever's tomb; and there was no comfort that the bishop, nor Sir Bors, not none of all his fellows could make him; it availed nothing.

Oh! ye mighty and pompous lords, winning in the glorious transitory of this unstable life, as in reigning over great realms and mighty great countries, fortified with strong castles and towers, edified with many a rich city; yea also, ye fierce and mighty knights, so valiant in adventurous deeds of arms, behold! behold! see how this mighty conqueror, King Arthur, whom in his human life all the world doubted,[1] yea also the noble Queen Guenever, which sometime sat in her chair adorned with gold, pearls, and precious stones, now lie full low in obscure foss, or pit, covered with clods of earth and clay! Behold also this mighty champion, Sir Lancelot, peerless of all knighthood; see now how he lieth grovelling upon the cold mould; now being so feeble and faint, that sometime was so terrible: how, and in what manner, ought ye to be so desirous of worldly honour so dangerous? Therefore, me thinketh this present book is right necessary often to be read; for in all[2] ye find the most gracious, knightly, and virtuous war, of the most noble knights of the world, whereby they got praising continually; also me seemeth, by the oft reading thereof, ye shall greatly desire to accustom yourself in following of those gracious knightly deeds; that is to say, to dread God and to love righteousness, faithfully and courageously to serve your sovereign prince; and, the more that God hath

[1] Dreaded (held as *redoubtable*). [2] It?

given you the triumphal honour, the meeker ought ye to be, ever fearing the unstableness of this deceitful world.

. . . . . .

And so, within fifteen days, they came to Joyous Guard, and there they laid his corpse in the body of the quire, and sung and read many psalters and prayers over him and about him: and even his visage was laid open and naked, that all folk might behold him. For such was the custom in those days, that all men of worship should so lie with open visage till that they were buried. And right thus as they were at their service there came Sir Ector de Maris, that had sought seven years all England, Scotland, and Wales, seeking his brother Sir Lancelot. . . .

And then Sir Ector threw his shield, his sword, and his helm from him; and when he beheld Sir Lancelot's visage, he fell down in a swoon; and, when he awoke, it were hard for any tongue to tell the doleful complaints that he made for his brother. "Ah, Sir Lancelot," said he, "thou wert head of all Christian knights."—"And now, I dare say," said Sir Bors, "that Sir Lancelot, there thou liest, thou wert never matched of none earthly knight's hands. And thou wert the courtliest knight that ever bare shield; and thou wert the truest friend to thy lover that ever bestrode horse; and thou wert the truest lover, of a sinful man, that ever loved woman; and thou wert the kindest man that ever stroke with sword; and thou wert the goodliest person that ever came among press of knights; and thou wert the meekest man, and the gentlest, that ever eat in hall among ladies; and thou wert the sternest knight to thy mortal foe that ever put spear in rest."

English Poets.—Occleve; Lydgate.

The most numerous class of writers in the mother tongue belonging to this time, are the poets, by courtesy so called. We must refer to the learned and curious pages of of Warton, or to the still more elaborate researches of Ritson,* for the names of a crowd of worthless and forgotten versifiers that fill up the annals of our national minstrelsy from Chaucer to Lord Surrey. The last-mentioned antiquary has furnished a list of about seventy English poets who flourished in this interval. The first known writer of any considerable quantity of verse after Chaucer is Thomas Occleve. Warton places him about the year 1420. He is the author of many minor pieces, which mostly remain in manuscript—although "six of peculiar stupidity," says Ritson, "were selected and published" by Dr. Askew in 1796;—and also of a longer poem, entitled De Regimine Principum (On the Government of Princes),

* Bibliographia Poetica.

chiefly founded on a Latin work, with the same title, written in the thirteenth century by an Italian ecclesiastic Egidius, styled the Doctor Fundatissimus, and on the Latin treatise on the game of chess of Jacobus de Casulis, another Italian writer of the same age—the latter being the original of the Game of the Chess, translated by Caxton from the French, and printed by him in 1474. Occleve's poem has never been published—and is chiefly remembered for a drawing of Chaucer by the hand of Occleve, which is found in one of the manuscripts of it now in the British Museum.* Occleve repeatedly speaks of Chaucer as his master and poetic father, and was no doubt personally acquainted with the great poet. All that Occleve appears to have gained, however, from his admirable model is some initiation in that smoothness and regularity of diction of which Chaucer's writings set the first great example. His own endowment of poetical power and feeling was very small—the very titles of his pieces, as Warton remarks, indicating the poverty and frigidity of his genius.

By far the most famous of these versifiers of the fifteenth century is John Lydgate, the monk of Bury, whom the Historian of our Poetry considers to have arrived at his highest point of eminence about the year 1430. Ritson has given a list of about 250 poems attributed to Lydgate. Indeed he seems to have followed the manufacture of rhymes as a sort of trade, furnishing any quantity to order whenever he was called upon. On one occasion, for instance, we find him employed by the historian Whethamstede, who was abbot of St. Albans, to make a translation into English, for the use of that convent, of the Latin legend of its patron saint. "The chronicler who records a part of this anecdote," observes Warton, "seems to consider Lydgate's translation as a matter of mere manual mechanism; for he adds, that Whethamstede paid for the translation, the writing, and

* Harl. MS. 4866. This portrait, which is a half-length, is coloured. There is a full-length portrait in another copy of Occleve's Poems in Royal MS. 17 D. VI.—See Life of Chaucer, by Sir Harris Nicolas, pp. 104, &c.

illuminations, one hundred shillings." * Lydgate, however, though excessively diffuse, and possessed of very little strength or originality of imagination, is a considerably livelier and more expert writer than Occleve. His memory was also abundantly stored with the learning of his age; he had travelled in France and Italy, and was intimately acquainted with the literature of both these countries; and his English makes perhaps a nearer approach to the modern form of the language than that of any preceding writer. His best-known poem consists of nine books of Tragedies, as he entitles them, respecting the falls of princes, translated from a Latin work of Boccaccio's: it was printed at London in the reign of Henry VIII. A Selection from the Minor Poems of Dan John Lydgate, edited by Mr. Halliwell, has been printed for the Percy Society, 8vo. Lon. 1840.

Scottish Poets.—Wynton; James I.; Henryson; Holland; Blind Henry.

The most remarkable portion of our poetical literature belonging to the fifteenth century (as also, we shall presently find, of that belonging to the first half of the sixteenth), was contributed by Scottish writers. The earliest successor of Barbour was Andrew of Wyntown, or Wynton, a canon regular of the Priory of St. Andrews, and Prior of the Monastery of St. Serf's Inch in Lochleven, one of the establishments subordinate to that great house, who is supposed to have been born about 1350, and whose Originale Cronykil of Scotland appears to have been finished in the first years of the fifteenth century. It is a long poem, of nine books, written in the same octosyllabic rhyme with the Bruce of Barbour, to which it was no doubt intended to serve as a kind of introduction. Wynton, however, has very little of the old archdeacon's poetic force and fervour; and even his style, though in general sufficiently simple and clear, is, if

* Hist. Eng. Poetry, vol. II. p. 363.

anything, rather ruder than that of his predecessor—a difference which is probably to be accounted for by Barbour's frequent residences in England and more extended intercourse with the world. The Chronykil is principally interesting in an historical point of view, and in that respect it is of considerable value and authority, for Wynton, besides his merits as a distinct narrator, had evidently taken great pains to obtain the best information within his reach with regard to the events both of his own and of preceding times. The work begins (as was then the fashion), with the creation of the world, and comes down to the year 1408; but the first five books are occupied rather with general than with Scottish history. The last four books, together with such parts of the preceding ones as contain anything relating to British affairs, were very carefully edited by the late Mr. David Macpherson (the author of the well-known Annals of Commerce and other works), in two volumes 8vo. Lon 1795. It is deserving of notice that a considerable portion of Wynton's Chronicle is not his own composition, but was the contribution of another contemporary poet; namely, all from the 19th chapter of the Eighth to the 10th chapter of the Ninth Book inclusive, comprising the space from 1324 to 1390, and forming about a third of the four concluding books. This he conscientiously acknowledges, in very careful and explicit terms, both at the beginning and end of the insertion. We may give what he says in the latter place, as a short sample of his style:—

This part last treated beforn,
Fra Davy the Brus our king wes born
While[1] his sister son Robert
The Second, our king, than called Stuert,
That nest[2] him reigned successive,
His days had ended of his live,
Wit ye well, wes nought my dite;[3]
Thereof I dare me well acquite.
Wha that it dited, nevertheless,
He showed him of mair cunnandness
Than me commendis[4] his treatise,

[1] Till. [2] Next. [3] Writing.
[4] He showed himself of more cunning (skill) than I who commend.

But[1] favour, wha[2] will it clearly prize.
This part wes written to me send;
And I, that thought for to mak end
Of that purpose I took on hand,
Saw it was well accordand
To my matere: I wes right glad;
For I was in my travail sad;
I eked[3] it here to this dite,
For to mak me some respite.

This is interesting as making it probable that poetical, or at least metrical, composition in the national dialect was common in Scotland at this early date.

Of all our poets of the early part of the fifteenth century the one of greatest eminence must be considered to be King James I. of Scotland, even if he be only the author of The King's Quair (that is, the King's *quire* or *book*), his claim to which has scarcely been disputed. It is a serious poem, of nearly 1400 lines, arranged in seven-line stanzas; the style in great part allegorical; the subject, the love of the royal poet for the lady Joanna Beaufort, whom he eventually married, and whom he is said to have first beheld walking in the garden below from the window of his prison in the Round Tower of Windsor Castle. The poem was in all probability written during his detention in England, and previous to his marriage, which took place in February 1424, a few months before his return to his native country. In the concluding stanza James makes grateful mention of his—

maisters dear
Gower and Chaucer, that on the steppes sate
Of rhetorick while they were livand here,
Superlative as poets laureate,
Of morality and eloquence ornate;

and he is evidently an imitator of the great father of English poetry. The poem too must be regarded as written in English rather than in Scotch, although the difference between the two dialects, as we have seen, was not so great at this early date as it afterwards became, and although James, who was in his eleventh year when he was carried away to

[1] Without. [2] Whosoever. [3] Added.

England in 1405 by Henry IV., may not have altogether avoided the peculiarities of his native idiom. The Quair was first published from the only manuscript (one of the Selden Collection in the Bodleian Library), by Mr. W. Tytler at Edinburgh, in 1783; there have been several editions since. Two other poems of considerable length, in a humorous style, have also been attributed to James I.—Peebles to the Play, and Christ's Kirk on the Green, both in the Scottish dialect; but they are more probably the productions of his equally gifted and equally unfortunate descendant James V. (b. 1511, d. 1542). Chalmers, however, assigns the former to James I. As for the two famous comic ballads of The Gaberlunyie Man, and the Jolly Beggar, which it has been usual among recent writers to speak of as by one or other of these kings, there seems to be no reasonable ground—not even that of tradition of any antiquity—for assigning them to either.

Chaucer, we have seen, appears to have been unknown to his contemporary Barbour; but after the time of James I. the Scottish poetry for more than a century bears evident traces of the imitation of the great English master. It was a consequence of the relative circumstances of the two countries, that, while the literature of Scotland, the poorer and ruder of the two, could exert no influence upon that of England, the literature of England could not fail powerfully to affect and modify that of its more backward neighbour. No English writer would think of studying or imitating Barbour; but every Scottish poet who arose after the fame of Chaucer had passed the border would seek, or, even if he did not seek, would still inevitably catch, some inspiration from that great example. If it could in any circumstances have happened that Chaucer should have remained unknown in Scotland, the singular fortunes of James I. were shaped as if on purpose to transfer the manner and spirit of his poetry into the literature of that country. From that time forward the native voice of the Scottish muse was mixed with this other foreign voice. One of the earliest Scottish

poets after James I. is Robert Henryson, or Henderson, the author of the beautiful pastoral of Robin and Makyne, which is popularly known from having been printed by Bishop Percy in his Reliques. He has left us a continuation or supplement to Chaucer's Troilus and Creseide, which is commonly printed along with the works of that poet under the title of The Testament of Fair Creseide. All that is known of the era of Henryson is that he was alive and very old about the close of the fifteenth century. He may therefore probably have been born about the time that James I. returned from England. Henryson is also the author of a translation into English or Scottish verse of Æsop's Fables, of which there is a MS. in the Harleian Collection (No. 3865), and which was printed at Edinburgh in 8vo. in 1621, under the title of The Moral Fables of Æsop the Phrygian, compyled into eloquent and ornamental meter, by Robert Henrison, schoolemaster of Dumferling. To Henryson, moreover, it may be noticed, Mr. David Laing attributes the tale of Orpheus and Eurydice contained in the collection of old poetry, entitled The Knightly Tale of Golagrus and Gawane, &c., reprinted by him in 1827.

Contemporary, too, with Henryson, if not perhaps rather before him, was Sir John or Richard Holland. His poem entitled The Buke of the Howlat (that is, the owl), a wild and rugged effusion in alliterative metre, cannot be charged as an imitation of Chaucer, or of any other English writer of so late a date.

Another Scottish poet of this time the style and spirit as well as the subject of whose poetry must be admitted to be exclusively national is Henry the Minstrel, commonly called Blind Harry, author of the famous poem on the life and acts of Wallace. The testimony of the historian John Major to the time at which Henry wrote is sufficiently express: "The entire book of William Wallace," he says, "Henry, who was blind from his birth, composed in the time of my infancy (*meae infantiae tempore cudit*), and what things used popularly to be reported wove into popular verse, in which he was

skilled." Major is believed to have been born about 1469; so that Henry's poem may be assigned to the end of the third quarter of the fifteenth century. The standard edition is that published from a manuscript dated 1488 by Dr. Jamieson along with Barbour's poem, 4to. Edin. 1820. The Wallace, which is a long poem of about 12,000 decasyllabic lines, used to be a still greater favourite than was The Bruce with the author's countrymen; and Dr. Jamieson does not hesitate to place Harry as a poet before Barbour. In this judgment, however, probably few critical readers will concur, although both Warton and Ellis, without going so far, have also acknowledged in warm terms the rude force of the Blind Minstrel's genius. It may be remarked, by the way, that were it not for Major's statement, and the common epithet that has attached itself to his name, we should scarcely have supposed that the author of Wallace had been either blind from his birth or blind at all. He nowhere himself alludes to any such circumstance. His poem, besides, abounds in descriptive passages, and in allusions to natural appearances and other objects of sight: perhaps, indeed, it might be said that there is an ostentation of that kind of writing, such as we meet with also in the modern Scotch poet Blacklock's verses, and which it may be thought is not unnatural to a blind person. Nor are his apparent literary acquirements to be very easily reconciled with Major's account, who represents him as going about reciting his verses among the nobility (*coram principibus*), and thereby obtaining food and raiment, of which, says the historian, he was worthy (*victum, et vestitum, quo dignus erat, nactus est*). "He seems," as Dr. Jamieson observes, "to have been pretty well acquainted with that kind of history which was commonly read in that period." The Doctor refers to allusions which he makes in various places to the romance histories of Hector, of Alexander the Great, of Julius Cæsar, and of Charlemagne; and he conceives that his style of writing is more richly strewed with the more peculiar phraseology of the writers of romance than that of Barbour. But what is most remarkable is that

he distinctly declares his poem to be throughout a translation from the Latin. The statement, which occurs toward the conclusion, seems too express and particular to be a mere imitation of the usage of the romance-writers, many of whom appeal, but generally in very vague terms, to a Latin original for their marvels:—

> Of Wallace life wha has a further feel[1]
> May show furth mair with wit and eloquence;
> For I to this have done my diligence,
> Efter the proof given fra the Latin book
> Whilk Maister Blair in his time undertook,
> In fair Latin compiled it till ane end:
> With thir witness the mair is to commend.[2]
> Bishop Sinclair than lord was of Dunkell;
> He gat this book, and confirmed it himsell
> For very true; therefore he had no drede;[3]
> Himself had seen great part of Wallace deed.
> His purpose was till have sent it to Rome,
> Our fader of kirk thereon to give his doom.
> But Maistre Blair and als Shir Thomas Gray
> Efter Wallace they lestit[4] mony day:
> Thir twa[5] knew best of Gud Schir William's deed,
> Fra sixteen year while[6] nine and twenty yeid.[7]

In another place (Book V. v. 538 *et seq.*) he says:—

> Maistre John Blair was oft in that message,
> A worthy clerk, baith wise and right savage.
> Lewit[8] he was before in Paris town
> Amang maisters in science and renown.
> Wallace and he at hame in schul had been:
> Soon efterwart, as verity is seen,
> He was the man that principal undertook,
> That first compiled in dite[9] the Latin book
> Of Wallace life, right famous in renown;
> And Thomas Gray, person of Libertown;

Blind Harry's notions of the literary character are well exemplified by his phrase of a "worthy clerk, baith wise and right savage." He himself, let his scholarship have been what it may, is in spirit as thorough a Scot as if he had never heard the sound of any other than his native tongue. His gruff patriotism speaks out in his opening lines:—

[1] Knowledge.
[2] We do not profess to understand this line. *Thir* is Scotch for *these*. *Mair* is *mar* in Jamieson.
[3] Doubt.
[4] Survived (lasted).
[5] These two.
[6] Till.
[7] Went, passed.
[8] Dr. Jamieson's only interpretation is "allowed, left."
[9] Writing.

Our antecessors, that we suld of read,
And hold in mind their noble worthy deed,
We lat owerslide,[1] through very sleuthfulness,
And casts us ever till other business.
Till honour enemies is our hail[2] intent;
It has been seen in thir times bywent:
Our auld enemies comen of Saxons blud,
That never yet to Scotland wald do gud,
But ever on force and contrar hail their will,
How great kindness there has been kythe[3] them till.
It is weil knawn on mony divers side
How they have wrought into their mighty pride
To hald Scotland at under evermair:
But God above has made their might to pair.[4]

Of the fighting and slaying, which makes up by far the greater part of the poem, it is difficult to find a sample that is short enough for our purpose. The following is a small portion of what is called the battle of Shortwoodshaw:—

On Wallace set a bicker bauld and keen;
A bow he bare was big and well beseen,
And arrows als, baith lang and sharp with aw;[5]
No man was there that Wallace bow might draw.
Right stark he was, and in to souer gear;[6]
Bauldly he shot amang they[7] men of wer.[8]
Ane angel heade[9] to the huiks he drew
And at a shot the foremost soon he slew.
Inglis archers, that hardy war and wight,
Amang the Scots bickered with all their might;
Their aweful shot was felon[10] for to bide;
Of Wallace men they woundit sore that tide;
Few of them was sicker[11] of archery;
Better they were, an they gat even party,
In field to bide either with swerd or spear.
Wallace perceivit his men tuk mickle deir:[12]
He gart[13] them change, and stand nought in to stead;[14]
He cast all ways to save them fra the dead.[15]
Full great travail upon himself tuk he;
Of Southron men feil[16] archers he gart dee.[17]
Of Longcashier[18] bowmen was in that place
A sair[19] archer aye waitit on Wallace,

[1] Allow to slip out of memory. [2] Whole.
[3] Shown. [4] Diminish, impair.
[5] Dr. Jamieson's only interpretation is *owe*. It would almost seem as if we had here the modern Scottish *witha'* for *withall*.
[6] In sure warlike accoutrements. [7] These.
[8] War. [9] The barbed head of an arrow. [10] Terrible.
[11] Sure. [12] Took much hazard, ran much risk. [13] Caused.
[14] Stand not in their place. Perhaps it should be "o stead," that is, *one place*. [15] Death. [16] Many.
[17] Caused die. [18] Lancashire. [19] Skilful.

At ane opine,[1] whar he usit to repair;
At him he drew a sicker shot and sair
Under the chin, through a collar of steel
On the left side, and hurt his halse[2] some deal.
Astonied he was, but nought greatly aghast;
Out fra his men on him he followit fast;
In the turning with gud will has him ta'en
Upon the crag,[3] in sunder straik the bain.

It will be seen from this specimen that the Blind Minstrel is a vigorous versifier. His descriptions, however, though both clear and forcible, and even not unfrequently animated by a dramatic abruptness and boldness of expression, want the bounding airy spirit and flashing light of those of Barbour. As a specimen of his graver style we may give his Envoy or concluding lines:—

Go, noble book, fulfillit of gud sentence,
Suppose thou be barren of eloquence:
Go, worthy book, fulfillit of suthfast deed;
But in langage of help thou hast great need.
Whan gud makers[4] rang weil into Scotland,
Great harm was it that nane of them ye fand.[5]
Yet there is part that can thee weil avance;
Now bide thy time, and be a remembrance.
I you besek of your benevolence,
Wha will nought lou,[6] lak nought[7] my eloquence;
(It is weil knawn I am a'burel[8] man)
For here is said as gudly as I can;
My sprite feeles ne termes asperans.[9]
Now beseek God, that giver is of grace,
Made hell and erd,[10] and set the heaven above,
That he us grant of his dear lestand[11] love.

Prose Writers:—More; Elyot; Tyndal; Cranmer; Latimer.

The fact most deserving of remark in the progress of English literature, for the first half of the sixteenth century, is the cultivation that now came to be bestowed upon the

[1] Open place?
[2] Neck.
[3] Throat.
[4] Poets.
[5] Found.
[6] Love?
[7] Scoff not at.
[8] Boorish, clownish.
[9] Understands no lofty (aspiring) terms. But it seems impossible that *asperans* can rhyme to *grace*.
[10] Earth.
[11] Lasting.

language in the form of prose composition,—a form always in the order of time subsequent to that of verse in the natural development of a national language and literature. Long before this date, indeed, Chaucer, in addition to what he did in his proper field, had given proof of how far his genius preceded his age by several examples of composition in prose, in which may be discerned the presence of something of the same high art with which he first elevated our poetry; but, besides that his genius drew him with greatest force to poetry, and that the foreign models upon which he seems chiefly to have formed himself led him in the same direction, the state of the English language at that day perhaps fitted it better for verse than for prose, or rather, it had not yet arrived at the point at which it could be so advantageously employed in prose as in verse. At all events Chaucer had no worthy successor as a writer of prose, any more than as a writer of poetry, till more than a century after his death. Meanwhile, however, the language, though not receiving much artificial cultivation, was still undergoing a good deal of what, in a certain sense, might be called application to literary purposes, by its employment both in public proceedings and documents, and also in many popular writings, principally on the subject of the new opinions in religion, both after and previous to the invention of printing. In this more extended use and exercise, by persons of some scholarship at least, if not bringing much artistic feeling and skill to the task of composition, it must, as a mere language, or system of vocables and grammatical forms, have not only sustained many changes and modifications, but, it is probable, acquired on the whole considerable enlargement of its capacities and powers, and been generally carried forward towards maturity under the impulse of a vigorous principle of growth and expansion. But it is not till some time after the commencement of the sixteenth century that we can properly date the rise of our classical prose literature. Perhaps the earliest compositions that are entitled to be included under that name are some of those of

Sir Thomas More, especially his Life and Reign of King Edward V., which Rastell, his brother-in-law, by whom it was first printed in 1557, from, as he informs us, a copy in More's handwriting, states to have been written by him when he was under-sheriff of London, in the year 1513.* Most of More's other English writings are of a controversial character, and are occupied about subjects both of very temporary importance, and that called up so much of the eagerness and bitterness of the author's party zeal as considerably to disturb and mar both his naturally gentle and benignant temper and the oily eloquence of his style; but this historic piece is characterized throughout by an easy narrative flow which rivals the sweetness of Herodotus. It is certainly the first English historic composition that can be said to aspire to be more than a mere chronicle.

The letter which Sir Thomas More wrote to his wife in 1528, after the burning of his house at Chelsea, affords one of the best specimens of the epistolary style of this period:—

Maistres Alyce, in my most harty wise I recommend me to you; and whereas I am enfourmed by my son Heron of the losse of our barnes and of our neighbours also, with all the corn that was therein, albeit (saving God's pleasure) it is gret pitie of so much good corne lost, yet sithvit hath liked hym to sende us such a chaunce, we must and are bounden, not only to be content, but also to be glad of his visitacion. He sente us all that we have loste: and, sith he hath by such a chaunce taken it away againe, his pleasure be fulfilled. Let us never grudge ther at, but take it in good worth, and hartely thank him, as well for adversitie as for prosperite. And peradventure we have more cause to thank him for our losse then for our winning; for his wisdome better seeth what is good for vs then we do our selves. Therfore I pray you be of good

* Sir Henry Ellis, however, in the Preface to his edition of Harding's Chronicle (4to. 1812), has called attention to what had not before been noticed, namely, that the writer speaks as if he had been present with Edward IV. in his last sickness, which More could not have been, being then (in 1483) only a child of three years old; and Sir Henry infers that the manuscript from which the tract was printed by Rastell, although in More's handwriting, could have been only a copy made by him of a narrative drawn up by some one else, very probably Cardinal Morton. But, although Morton was a person of distinguished eloquence, the style is surely far too modern to have proceeded from a writer who was born within ten years after the close of the fourteenth century, the senior of More by seventy years.

chere, and take all the howsold with you to church, and there thanke God, both for that he hath given us, and for that he hath taken from us, and for that he hath left us, which if it please hym he can encrease when he will. And if it please hym to leave us yet lesse, at his pleasure be it.

I pray you to make some good ensearche what my poore neighbours have loste, and bid them take no thought therfore: for and I shold not leave myself a spone, ther shal no pore neighbour of mine here no losse by any chaunce happened in my house. I pray you be with my children and your household merry in God. And devise some what with your frendes, what waye wer best to take, for provision to he made for corne for our household, and for sede thys yere comming, if ye thinke it good that we kepe the ground stil in our handes. And whether ye think it good that we so shall do or not, yet I think it were not best sodenlye thus to leave it all up, and to put away our folke of our farme till we have somwhat advised us thereon. How beit if we have more nowe then ye shall nede, and which can get them other maisters, ye may then discharge us of them. But I would not that any man were sodenly sent away he wote nere wether.

At my comming hither I perceived none other but that I shold tary still with the Kinges Grace. But now I shal (I think), because of this chance, get leave this next weke to come home and se you: and then shall we further devyse together uppon all thinges what order shalbe best to take. And thus as hartely fare you well with all our children as ye can wishe. At Woodestok the thirde daye of Septembre by the hand of

your louing husbande
THOMAS MORE Knight.*

Along with More, as one of the earliest writers of classic English prose, may be mentioned his friend Sir Thomas Elyot, the author of the political treatise entitled The Governor, and of various other works, one of which is a Latin and English Dictionary, the foundation of most of the compilations of the same kind that were published for a century afterwards. More was executed in 1535, and Elyot also died some years before the middle of the century. William Tyndal's admirable translations of the New Testament and of some portions of the Old, and also numerous tracts by the same early reformer in his native tongue, which he wrote with remarkable correctness as well as with great vigour and eloquence, appeared between 1526 and his death in 1536. Next in the order of time among our more eminent prose writers may be placed some of the distinguished leaders of the Reformation in the latter part of the reign of

* Sir Thomas More's Works, by Rastell, 4to. 1557, pp. 1418, 1419.

Henry VIII. and in that of Edward VI., more especially Archbishop Cranmer, whose compositions in his native tongue are of considerable volume, and are characterized, if not by any remarkable strength of expression or weight of matter, yet by a full and even flow both of words and thought. On the whole, Cranmer was the greatest writer among the founders of the English Reformation. His friends and fellow-labourers, Ridley and Latimer, were also celebrated in their day for their ready popular elocution; but the few tracts of Ridley's that remain are less eloquent than learned, and Latimer's discourses are rather quaint and curious than either learned or eloquent in any lofty sense of that term. Latimer is stated to have been one of the first English students of the Greek language; but this could hardly be guessed from his Sermons, which, except a few scraps of Latin, show scarcely a trace of scholarship or literature of any kind. In addressing the people from the pulpit, this honest, simple-minded bishop, feeling no exaltation either from his position or his subject, expounded the most sublime doctrines of religion in the same familiar and homely language in which the humblest or most rustic of his hearers were accustomed to chaffer with one another in the market-place about the price of a yard of cloth or a pair of shoes. Nor, indeed, was he more fastidious as to matter than as to manner: all the preachers of that age were accustomed to take a wide range over things in general, but Latimer went beyond everybody else in the miscellaneous assortment of topics he used to bring together from every region of heaven and earth,—of the affairs of the world that now is as well as of that which is to come. Without doubt his sermons must have been lively and entertaining far beyond the common run of that kind of compositions; the allusions with which they abounded to public events, and to life in all its colours and grades, from the palace to the cottage, from the prince to the peasant,—the anecdotes of his own experience and the other stories the old man would occasionally intersperse among his strictures and exhortations,—the expressiveness

of his unscrupulous and often startling phraseology,—all this, combined with the earnestness, piety, and real goodness and simplicity of heart that breathed from every word he uttered, may well be conceived to have had no little charm for the multitudes that crowded to hear his living voice; even as to us, after the lapse of three centuries, these sermons of Latimer's are still in the highest degree interesting both for the touches they contain in illustration of the manners and social condition of our forefathers, and as a picture of a very peculiar individual mind. They are also of some curiosity and value as a monument of the language of the period; but to what is properly to be called its literature, as we have said, they can hardly be considered as belonging at all.

Generally it may be observed, with regard to the English prose of the earlier part of the sixteenth century that it is both more simple in its construction, and of a more purely native character in other respects, than the style which came into fashion in the latter years of the Elizabethan period. When first made use of in prose composition, the mother-tongue was written as it was spoken; even such artifices and embellishments as are always prompted by the nature of verse were here scarcely aspired after or thought of; that which was addressed to and specially intended for the instruction of the people was set down as far as possible in the familiar forms and fashions of the popular speech, in genuine native words, and direct unincumbered sentences; no painful imitation of any learned or foreign model was attempted, nor any species of elaboration whatever, except what was necessary for mere perspicuity, in a kind of writing which was scarcely regarded as partaking of the character of literary composition at all. The delicacy of a scholarly taste no doubt influenced even the English style of such writers as More and his more eminent contemporaries or immediate followers; but whatever eloquence or dignity their compositions thus acquired was not the effect of any professed or conscious endeavour to write in English as

they would have written in what were called the learned tongues.

The age, indeed, of the critical cultivation of the language for the purposes of prose composition had already commenced; but at first that object was pursued in the best spirit and after the wisest methods. Erasmus, in one of his Letters, mentions that his friend Dean Colet laboured to improve his English style by the diligent perusal and study of Chaucer and the other old poets, in whose works alone the popular speech was to be found turned with any taste or skill to a literary use; and doubtless others of our earliest classic prose writers took lessons in their art in the same manner from these true fathers of our vernacular literature. And even the first professed critics and reformers of the language that arose among us proceeded in the main in a right direction and upon sound principles in the task they undertook. The appearance of a race of critical and rhetorical writers in any country is, in truth, always rather a symptom or indication than, what it has frequently been denounced as being, a cause of the corruption and decline of the national literature. The writings of Dionysius of Halicarnassus and of Quintilian, for instance, certainly did not hasten, but probably rather contributed to retard, the decay of the literature of ancient Greece and Rome. The first eminent English writer of this class was the celebrated Roger Ascham, the tutor of Queen Elizabeth, whose treatise entitled Toxophilus, the School or Partitions of Shooting, was published in 1545. The design of Ascham, in this performance, was not only to recommend to his countrymen the use of their old national weapon, the bow, but to set before them an example and model of a pure and correct English prose style. In his dedication of the work, To all the Gentlemen and Yeomen of England, he recommends to him that would write well in any tongue the counsel of Aristotle,—"To speak as the common people do, to think as wise men do." From this we may perceive that Ascham had a true feeling of the regard due to the great fountain-

head and oracle of the national language—the vocabulary of the common people. He goes on to reprobate the practice of many English writers, who by introducing into their compositions, in violation of the Aristotelian precept, many words of foreign origin, Latin, French, and Italian, made all things dark and hard. "Once," he says, "I communed with a man which reasoned the English tongue to be enriched and increased thereby, saying, Who will not praise that feast where a man shall drink at a dinner both wine, ale, and beer? Truly, quoth I, they be all good, every one taken by himself alone: but if you put malmsey and sack, red wine and white, ale and beer and all, in one pot, you shall make a drink neither easy to be known, nor yet wholesome for the body." The English language, however, it may be observed, had even already become too thoroughly and essentially a mixed tongue for this doctrine of purism to be admitted to the letter; nor, indeed, to take up Ascham's illustration, is it universally true, even in regard to liquids, that a salutary and palatable beverage can never be made by the interfusion of two or more different kinds. Our tongue is now, and was many centuries ago, not, indeed, in its grammatical structure, but in its vocabulary, as substantially and to as great an extent Neo-Latin as Gothic; it would be as completely torn in pieces and left the mere tattered rag of a language, useless for all the purposes of speaking as well as of writing, by having the foreign as by having the native element taken out of it. Ascham in his own writings uses many words of French and Latin origin (the latter mostly derived through the medium of the French); nay, the common people themselves of necessity did in his day, as they do still, use many such foreign words, or words not of English origin, and could scarcely have held communication with one another on the most ordinary occasions without so doing. It is another question whether it might not have been more fortunate if the original form of the national speech had remained in a state of celibacy and virgin purity; by the course of events the Gothic part of the

language has, in point of fact, been married to the Latin part of it; and what God or nature has thus joined together it is now beyond the competency of man to put asunder. The language, while it subsists, must continue to be the product of that union, and nothing else. As for Ascham's own style, both in his Toxophilus, and in his Schoolmaster, published in 1571, three years after the author's death, it is not only clear and correct, but idiomatic and muscular. That it is not rich or picturesque is the consequence of the character of the writer's mind, which was rather rhetorical than poetical. The publication of Ascham's Toxophilus was soon followed by an elaborate treatise expressly dedicated to the subject of English composition—The Art of Rhetorick, for the use of all such as are studious of Eloquence, set forth in English, by Thomas Wilson. Wilson, whose work appeared in 1553, takes pains to impress the same principles that Ascham had laid down before him with regard to purity of style and the general rule of writing well. But the very solicitude thus shown by the ablest and most distinguished of those who now assumed the guardianship of the vernacular tongue to protect it from having its native character overlaid and debased by an intermixture of terms borrowed from other languages, may be taken as evidence that such debasement was actually at this time going on; that our ancient English was beginning to be oppressed and half suffocated by additions from foreign sources brought in upon it faster than it could absorb and assimilate them. Wilson, indeed, proceeds to complain that this was the case. While some "powdered their talk with over-sea language," others, whom he designates as "the unlearned or foolish fantastical, that smell but of learning," were wont, he says, "so to Latin their tongues," that simple persons could not but wonder at their talk, and think they surely spake by some revelation from heaven. It may be suspected, however, that this affectation of unnecessary terms, formed from the ancient languages, was not confined to mere pretenders to learning. Another well-known critical writer of this period,

Webster Puttenham, in his Art of English Poesy, published in 1582, but believed to have been written a good many years earlier, in like manner advises the avoidance in writing of such words and modes of expression as are used "in the marches and frontiers, or in port towns where strangers haunt for traffic sake, or yet in universities, where scholars use much peevish affectation of words out of the primitive languages;" and he warns his readers that in some books were already to be found "many inkhorn terms so ill affected, brought in by men of learning, as preachers and schoolmasters, and many strange terms of other languages by secretaries, and merchants, and travellers, and many dark words, and not usual nor well-sounding, though they be daily spoken at court." On the whole, however, Puttenham considers the best standard both for speaking and writing to be "the usual speech of the court, and that of London and the shires lying about London within sixty miles, and not much above." This judgment is probably correct, although the writer was a gentleman pensioner, and perhaps also a cockney by birth.

Scottish Prose Writers.

Before the middle of the sixteenth century a few prose writers had also appeared in the Scottish dialect. The Scottish History of Hector Boethius, or Boecius (Boece or Boyce), translated from the Latin by John Bellenden, was printed at Edinburgh in 1537; and a translation by the same person of the first Five Books of Livy remained in MS. till it was published at Edinburgh, in 4to. in 1829; a second edition of the translation of Boecius having also been brought out there, in two vols. 4to., the same year. But the most remarkable composition in Scottish prose of this era is The Complaynt of Scotland, printed at St. Andrews in 1548, which has been variously assigned to Sir James Inglis, knight, a country gentleman of Fife, who died in 1554; to

Wedderburn, the supposed author of the Compendious Book of Godly and Spiritual Sangs and Ballats (reprinted from the edition of 1621 by Sir John Grahame Dalzell, 8vo. Edinburgh, 1801); and by its modern editor, the late John Leyden, in the elaborate and ingenious Dissertation prefixed to his reprint of the work, 8vo. Edinburgh, 1801, to the famous poet, Sir David Lyndsay.

It is worthy of remark, that, although in this work we have unquestionably the Scottish dialect, distinctly marked by various peculiarities (indeed the author in his prologue or preface expressly and repeatedly states that he has written in Scotch, "in our Scottis langage," as he calls it), yet one chief characteristic of the modern Scotch is still wanting—the suppression of the final *l* after a vowel or diphthong—just as it is in Barbour and Blind Harry. This change, as we before remarked, is probably very modern. It has taken place in all likelihood since Scotch ceased to be generally used in writing; the principle of growth, which, after a language passes under the government of the pen, is to a great extent suspended, having recovered its activity on the dialect being abandoned again to the comparatively lawless liberty, or at least looser guardianship, of the lips.

English Poets:—Hawes; Barklay.

The English poetical literature of the first half of the sixteenth century may be fairly described as the dawn of a new day. Two poetic names of some note belong to the reign of Henry VII.—Stephen Hawes and Alexander Barklay. Hawes is the author of many pieces, but is chiefly remembered for his Pastime of Pleasure, or History of Grand Amour and La Belle Pucelle, first printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1517, but written about two years earlier. Warton holds this performance to be almost the only effort of imagination and invention which had appeared in our poetry since Chaucer, and eulogizes it as containing no common

touches of romantic and allegoric fiction. Hawes was both a scholar and a traveller, and was perfectly familiar with the French and Italian poetry as well as with that of his own country. It speaks very little, however, for his taste, that, among the preceding English poets, he has evidently made Lydgate his model, even if it should be admitted that, as Warton affirms, he has added some new graces to the manner of that cold and wordy versifier. Lydgate and Hawes may stand together as perhaps the two writers who, in the century and a half that followed the death of Chaucer, contributed most to carry forward the regulation and modernisation of the language which he began. Barklay, who did not die till 1552, when he had attained a great age, employed his pen principally in translations, in which line his most celebrated performance is his Ship of Fools, from the German of Sebastian Brandt, which was printed in 1508. Barklay, however, besides consulting both a French and a Latin version of Brandt's poem, has enlarged his original with the enumeration and description of a considerable variety of follies which he found flourishing among his own countrymen. This gives the work some value as a record of the English manners of the time; but both its poetical and its satirical pretensions are of the very humblest order. At this date most of our writers of what was called poetry seem to have been occupied with the words in which they were to clothe their ideas almost to the exclusion of all the higher objects of the poetic art. And that, perhaps, is what of necessity happens at a particular stage in the progress of a nation's literature—at the stage corresponding to the transition state in the growth of the human being between the termination of free rejoicing boyhood and the full assurance of manhood begun; which is peculiarly the season not of achievement but of preparation, not of accomplishing ends, but of acquiring the use of means and instruments, and also, it may be added, of the aptitude to mistake the one of these things for the other.

Skelton.

But the poetry with the truest life in it produced in the reign of Henry the Seventh and the earlier part of that of his son is undoubtedly that of Skelton. John Skelton may have been born about or soon after 1460; he studied at Cambridge, if not at both universities; began to write and publish compositions in verse between 1480 and 1490; was graduated as poet laureat (a degree in grammar, including versification and rhetoric) at Oxford before 1490; was admitted *ad eundem* at Cambridge in 1493; in 1498 took holy orders; was probably about the same time appointed tutor to the young prince Henry, afterwards Henry the Eighth; was eventually promoted to be rector of Diss in Norfolk; and died in 1529 in the sanctuary at Westminster Abbey, where he had taken refuge to escape the vengeance of Cardinal Wolsey, originally his patron, but latterly the chief butt at which he had been wont to shoot his satiric shafts. As a scholar Skelton had a European reputation in his own day; and the great Erasmus has styled him *Britannicarum literarum decus et lumen* (the light and ornament of English letters). His Latin verses are distinguished by their purity and classical spirit. As for his English poetry, it is generally more of a mingled yarn, and of a much coarser fabric. In many of his effusions indeed, poured forth in sympathy with or in aid of some popular cry of the day, he is little better than a rhyming buffoon; much of his ribaldry is now nearly unintelligible; and it may be doubted if a considerable portion of his grotesque and apparently incoherent jingle ever had much more than the sort of half meaning with which a half-tipsy writer may satisfy readers as far gone as himself. Even in the most reckless of these compositions, however, he rattles along, through sense and nonsense, with a vivacity that had been a stranger to our poetry for many a weary day; and his freedom and spirit, even where most unrefined, must have been exhilarating after the long fit of

somnolency in which the English muse had dozed away the last hundred years. But much even of Skelton's satiric verse is instinct with genuine poetical vigour, and a fancy alert, sparkling, and various, to a wonderful degree. The charm of his writing lies in its natural ease and freedom, its inexhaustible and untiring vivacity; and these qualities are found both in their greatest abundance and their greatest purity where his subject is suggestive of the simplest emotions and has most of a universal interest. His Book of Philip Sparrow, for instance, an elegy on the sparrow of fair Jane Scroop, slain by a cat in the nunnery of Carow, near Norwich, extending (with the "commendation" of the "goodly maid") to nearly 1400 lines, is unrivalled in the language for elegant and elastic playfulness, and a spirit of whim that only kindles into the higher blaze the longer it is kept up. The second part, or "Commendation," in particular, is throughout animated and hilarious to a wonderful degree:—the *refrain*,—

> For this most goodly flower,
> This blossom of fresh colour,'
> So Jupiter me succour,
> She flourisheth new and new
> In beauty and virtue;
> *Hac claritate gemina,*
> *O Gloriosa femina,* &c.—

recurring often so suddenly and unexpectedly, yet always so naturally, has an effect like that of the harmonious evolutions of some lively and graceful dance. Have we not in this poem, by-the-by, the true origin of Skelton's peculiar dancing verse? Is it not Anacreontic, as the spirit also of the best of his poetry undoubtedly is?*

* A most valuable and acceptable present has been made to the lovers of our old poetry in a collected edition of Skelton's Poetical Works, 2 vols. 8vo. Lond. Rodd. 1843, by the Rev. Alexander Dyce, who has performed his difficult task in a manner to leave little or nothing further to be desired.

Roy; John Heywood.

Along with Skelton, viewed as he commonly has been only as a satirist, is usually classed William Roy, a writer who assisted Tyndal in his translation of the New Testament, and who is asserted by Bale to be the author of a singular work entitled, Read me and be not wroth, For I say nothing but troth, which is supposed to have been first printed abroad about 1525.* This is also a satire upon Wolsey and the clergy in general, and is as bitter as might be expected from the supposed author, who, having begun his life as a friar, spent the best part of it in the service of the Reformation, and finished it at the stake. Among the buffoon-poets of this age, is also to be reckoned John Heywood, styled the Epigrammatist, from the six centuries of Epigrams, or versified jokes, which form a remarkable portion of his works. Heywood's conversational jocularity has the equivocal credit of having been exceedingly consoling both to the old age of Henry VIII. and to his daughter Queen Mary: it must have been strong jesting that could stir the sense of the ludicrous in either of these terrible personages. Besides a number of plays, which are the most important of his productions, Heywood also wrote a long burlesque allegory, which fills a thick quarto volume, on the dispute between the old and the new religions, under the title of A Parable of the Spider and the Fly; where it appears that by the spider is intended the Protestant party, by the fly the Catholic, but in which, according to the judgment of old Harrison, "he dealeth so profoundly, and beyond all measure of skill, that neither he himself that made it, neither any one that readeth it, can reach unto the meaning thereof."**

* Ritson's Bibliog. Poet., p. 318.
** Description of England.

Scottish Poets:—Gawin Douglas; Dunbar; Lyndsay.

But, while in England the new life to which poetry had awakened had thus as yet produced so little except ribaldry and buffoonery, it is remarkable that in Scotland, where general social civilization was much less advanced, the art had continued to be cultivated in its highest departments with great success, and the language had already been enriched with some compositions worthy of any age. Perhaps the Scottish poetry of the earlier part of the sixteenth century may be regarded as the same spring which had visited England in the latter part of the fourteenth,—the impulse originally given by the poetry of Chaucer only now come to its height in that northern clime. Gawin Douglas, Bishop of Dunkeld, who flourished in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, and who is famous for his translation of the Æneid, the first metrical version of any ancient classic that had yet appeared in the dialect of either kingdom, affects great anxiety to eschew "Southron," or English, and to write his native tongue in all its breadth and plainness; but it does not follow, from his avoidance of English words, that he may not have formed himself to a great extent on the study of English models. At the same time it may be admitted that neither in his translation nor in his original works of King Hart, and the Palace of Honour,—which are two long allegories, full, the latter especially, of passages of great descriptive beauty,—does Douglas convict himself of belonging to the school of Chaucer. He is rather, if not the founder, at least the chief representative, of a syle of poetry which was attempted to be formed in Scotland by enriching and elevating the simplicity of Barbour and his immediate followers with an infusion of something of what was deemed a classic manner, drawn in part directly from the Latin writers, but more from those of the worst than those of the best age, in part from the French poetry, which now began

in like manner to aspire towards a classic tone. This preference, by the Scottish poets, of Latin and French to "Southron," as a source from which to supply the deficiencies of their native dialect, had probably no more reasonable origin than the political circumstances and feelings of the nation: the spirit of the national genius was antagonistic to it, and it therefore never could become more than a temporary fashion. Yet it infected more or less all the writers of this age; and amongst the rest, to a considerable extent, by far the greatest of them all, William Dunbar. This admirable master, alike of serious and of comic song, may justly be styled the Chaucer of Scotland, whether we look to the wide range of his genius, or to his eminence in every style over all the poets of his country who preceded and all who for ages came after him. That of Burns is certainly the only name among the Scottish poets that can yet be placed on the same line with that of Dunbar; and even the inspired ploughman, though the equal of Dunbar in comic power, and his superior in depth of passion, is not to be compared with the elder poet either in strength or in general fertility of imagination. Finally, to close the list, comes another eminent name, that of Sir David Lyndsay, whose productions are not indeed characterised by any high imaginative power, but yet display infinite wit, spirit, and variety in all the forms of the more familiar poetry. Lyndsay was the favourite, throughout his brief reign and life, of the accomplished and unfortunate James V., and survived to do perhaps as good service as any in the war against the ancient church by the tales, plays, and other products of his abounding satiric vein, with which he fed, and excited, and lashed up the popular contempt for the now crazy and tumbling fabric once so imposing and so venerated. Perhaps he also did no harm by thus taking off a little of the acrid edge of mere resentment and indignation with the infusion of a dash of merriment, and keeping alive a genial sense of the ludicrous in the midst of such serious work. If Dunbar is to be compared to Burns, Lyndsay may be

said to have his best representative among the more recent Scottish poets in Allan Ramsay, who does not, however, come so near to Lyndsay by a long way as Burns does to Dunbar.

Surrey; Wyatt.

Lyndsay is supposed to have survived till about the year 1567. Before that date a revival of the higher poetry had come upon England like the rising of a new day. Two names are commonly placed together at the head of our new poetical literature, Lord Surrey and Sir Thomas Wyatt. Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, memorable in our history as the last victim of the capricious and sanguinary tyranny of Henry VIII., had already, in his short life, which was terminated by the axe of the executioner in his twenty-seventh year, carried away from all his countrymen the laurels both of knighthood and of song. The superior polish alone of the best of Surrey's verses would place him at an immeasurable distance in advance of all his immediate predecessors. So remarkable, indeed, is the contrast in this respect which his poetry presents to theirs, that in modern times there has been claimed for this noble poet the honour of having been the first to introduce our existing system of rhythm into the language. The true merit of Surrey is, that, proceeding upon the same system of versification which had been introduced by Chaucer, and which, indeed, had in principle been followed by all the writers after Chaucer, however rudely or imperfectly some of them may have succeeded in the practice of it, he restored to our poetry a correctness, polish, and general spirit of refinement such as it had not known since Chaucer's time, and of which, therefore, in the language as now spoken, there was no previous example whatever. To this it may be added that he appears to have been the first, at least in this age, who sought to modulate his strains after that elder poetry of Italy, which

thenceforward became one of the chief fountain-heads of inspiration to that of England throughout the whole space of time over which is shed the golden light of the names of Spenser, of Shakespeare, and of Milton. Surrey's own imagination was neither rich nor soaring; and the highest qualities of his poetry, in addition to the facility and general mechanical perfection of the versification, are delicacy and tenderness. It is altogether a very light and bland Favonian breeze. The poetry of his friend Wyatt is of a different character, neither so flowing in form nor so uniformly gentle in spirit, but perhaps making up for its greater ruggedness by a force and a depth of sentiment occasionally which Surrey does not reach. The poems of Lord Surrey and Sir Thomas Wyatt were first published together in 1557.

To Surrey we owe the introduction into the language of our present form of blank verse, the suggestion of which he probably took from the earliest Italian example of that form of poetry, a translation of the First and Fourth Books of the Æneid by the Cardinal Hippolito de' Medici (or, as some say, by Francesco Maria Molza), which was published at Venice in 1541. A translation of the same two Books into English blank verse appeared in the collection of Surrey's Poems published by Tottel in 1557. Dr. Nott has shown that this translation was founded upon the metrical Scottish version of Gawin Douglas, which, although not published till 1553, had been finished, as the author himself informs us, in 1513. But it ought not to be forgotten that, as already remarked, we have one example at least of another form of blank verse in the Ormulum, centuries before Surrey's day.

THE ELIZABETHAN LITERATURE.

Of what is commonly called our Elizabethan literature, the greater portion appertains to the reign, not of Elizabeth, but of James—to the seventeenth, not to the sixteenth century. The common name, nevertheless, is the fair and proper one. It sprung up in the age of Elizabeth, and was mainly the product of influences which belonged to that age, although their effect extended into another. It was born of and ripened by that sunny morning of a new day,—"great Eliza's golden time,"—when a general sense of security had given men ease of mind and disposed them to freedom of thought, while the economical advancement of the country put life and spirit into everything, and its growing power and renown filled and elevated the national heart. But such periods of quiet and prosperity seem only to be intellectually productive when they have been preceded and ushered in by a time of uncertainty and struggle which has tried men's spirits: the contrast seems to be wanted to make the favourable influences be felt and tell; or the faculty required must come in part out of the strife and contention. The literature of our Elizabethan age, more emphatically, may be said to have had this double parentage: if that brilliant day was its mother, the previous night of storm was its father.

The Mirror for Magistrates.

Our classical Elizabethan poetry and other literature dates only from about the middle of the reign; most of what was produced in the earlier half of it, constrained, harsh, and immature, still bears upon it the impress of the preceding barbarism. Nearly coincident with its commencement is the first appearance of a singular work, The Mirror for

Magistrates. It is a collection of narratives of the lives of various remarkable English historical personages, taken, in general, with little more embellishment than their reduction to a metrical form, from the common popular chronicles; and the idea of it appears to have been borrowed from a Latin work of Boccaccio's, which had been translated and versified many years before by Lydgate, under the title of The Fall of Princes. It was planned and begun (it is supposed about the year 1557) by Thomas Sackville, afterwards distinguished as a statesman, and ennobled by the titles of Lord Buckhurst and Earl of Dorset. But Sackville soon found himself obliged to relinquish the execution of his extensive design, which contemplated a survey of the whole range of English history from William the Conqueror to the end of the wars of the Roses, to other hands. The two writers to whom he recommended the carrying on of the work were Richard Baldwynne, who was in orders, and had already published a metrical version of the Song of Solomon, and George Ferrers, who was a person of some rank, having sat in parliament in the time of Henry VIII., but who had latterly been chiefly known as a composer of occasional interludes for the diversion of the Court. It is a trait of the times that, although a member of Lincoln's Inn, and known both as a legal and an historical author, Ferrers was in 1552-3 appointed by Edward VI. to preside over the Christmas revels at the royal palace of Greenwich in the office of Lord of Misrule: Stow tells us that upon this occasion he "so pleasantly and wisely behaved himself, that the king had great delight in his pastimes." Baldwynne and Ferrers called other writers to their assistance, among whom were Thomas Churchyard, Phaer, the translator of Virgil, &c.; and the book, in its first form and extent, was published in a quarto volume in 1559. The Mirror for Magistrates immediately acquired and for a considerable time retained great popularity; a second edition of it was published in 1563; a third in 1571; a fourth, with the addition of a series of new lives from the fabulous history of the early Britons,

by John Higgins, in 1574; a fifth, in 1587; a sixth, with further additions, in 1610, by Richard Nichols, assisted by Thomas Blenerhasset (whose contributions, however, had been separately printed in 1578).* The copiousness of the plan, into which any narrative might be inserted belonging to either the historical or legendary part of the national annals, and that without any trouble in the way of connexion or adaptation, had made the work a receptacle for the contributions of all the ready versifiers of the day—a common, or parish green, as it were, on which a fair was held to which any one who chose might bring his wares—or rather a sort of continually growing monument, or *cairn*, to which every man added his stone, or little separate specimen of brick and mortar, who conceived himself to have any skill in building the lofty rhyme. There were scarcely any limits to the size to which the book might have grown, except the mutability of the public taste, which will permit no one thing, good or bad, to go on for ever. The Mirror for Magistrates, however, for all its many authors, is of note in the history of our poetry for nothing else which it contains, except the portions contributed by its contriver Sackville, consisting only of one legend, that of Henry, Duke of Buckingham (Richard the Third's famous accomplice and victim, and grandfather of Lord Stafford, the great patron of the work), and the introduction, or Induction, as it is called, prefixed to that narrative, which however is said to have been originally intended to stand at the head of the whole work. Both for his poetical genius, and in the history of the language, Sackville and his two poems in the Mirror for Magistrates—more especially this Induction—must be considered as forming the connecting link or bridge between Chaucer and Spenser, between the Canterbury Tales and the Fairy Queen.

Nothing is wanting to Sackville that belongs to force either of conception or of expression. In his own world of

* A reprint of the Mirror for Magistrates, in 2 (sometimes divided into 3) vols. 4to., was brought out by the late Mr. Hazlewood in 1815.

the sombre and sad, also, he is almost as great an inventor as he is a colourist; and Spenser has been indebted to him for many hints, as well as for example and inspiration in a general sense: what most marks the immaturity of his style is a certain operose and constrained air, a stiffness and hardness of manner, like what we find in the works of the earliest school of the Italian painters, before Raphael and Michael Angelo arose to convert the art from a painful repetition or mimicry of reality into a process of creation — from the timid slave of nature into her glorified rival. Of the flow and variety, the genuine spirit of light and life, that we have in Spenser and Shakespeare, there is little in Sackville; his poetry—ponderous, gloomy, and monotonous —is still oppressed by the shadows of night; and we see that, although the darkness is retiring, the sun has not yet risen.

Origin of the Regular Drama.

From the first introduction of dramatic representations in England, probably as early, at least, as the beginning of the twelfth century, down to the beginning of the fifteenth, or perhaps somewhat later, the only species of drama known was that styled the Miracle, or Miracle-play. The subjects of the miracle-plays were all taken from the histories of the Old and New Testament, or from the legends of saints and martyrs; and, indeed, it is probable that their original design was chiefly to instruct the people in religious knowledge. They were often acted as well as written by clergymen, and were exhibited in abbeys, in churches, and in churchyards, on Sundays or other holidays. It appears to have been not till some time after their first introduction that miracle-plays came to be annually represented under the direction and at the expense of the guilds or trading companies of towns, as at Chester and elsewhere. The characters, or *dramatis personæ*, of the miracle-plays, though sometimes supernatural

or legendary, were always actual personages, historical or imaginary; and in that respect these primitive plays approached nearer to the regular drama than those by which they were succeeded—the Morals, or Moral-plays, in which, not a history, but an apologue was represented, and in which the characters were all allegorical. The moral-plays are traced back to the early part of the reign of Henry VI., and they appear to have gradually arisen out of the miracle-plays, in which, of course, characters very nearly approaching in their nature to the impersonated vices and virtues of the new species of drama must have occasionally appeared. The Devil of the Miracles, for example, would very naturally suggest the Vice of the Morals; which latter, however, it is to be observed, also retained the Devil of their predecessors, who was too amusing and popular a character to be discarded. Nor did the moral-plays altogether put down the miracle-plays: in many of the provincial towns, at least, the latter continued to be represented almost to as late a date as the former. Finally, by a process of natural transition very similar to that by which the sacred and supernatural characters of the religious drama had been converted into the allegorical personifications of the moral-plays, these last, gradually becoming less and less vague and shadowy, at length, about the middle of the sixteenth century, boldly assumed life and reality, giving birth to the first examples of regular tragedy and comedy.

Both moral-plays, however, and even the more ancient miracle-plays, continued to be occasionally performed down to the very end of the sixteenth century. One of the last dramatic representations at which Elizabeth was present, was a moral-play, entitled The Contention between Liberality and Prodigality, which was performed before her Majesty in 1600, or 1601. This production was printed in 1602, and was probably written not long before that time: it has been said to have been the joint production of Thomas Lodge and Robert Greene, the last of whom died in 1592. The only three manuscripts of the Chester miracle-plays now

extant were written in 1600, 1604, and 1607, most probably while the plays still continued to be acted. There is evidence that the ancient annual miracle-plays were acted at Tewkesbury at least till 1585, at Coventry till 1591, at Newcastle till 1598, and at Kendal down even to the year 1603.

As has been observed, however, by Mr. Collier, the latest and best historian of the English drama, the moral-plays were enabled to keep possession of the stage so long as they did, partly by means of the approaches they had for some time been making to a more improved species of composition, "and partly because, under the form of allegorical fiction and abstract character, the writers introduced matter which covertly touched upon public events, popular prejudices, and temporary opinions." * He mentions, in particular, the moral entitled The Three Ladies of London, printed in 1584, and its continuation, The Three Lords and Three Ladies of London, which appeared in 1590 (both by R. W.), as belonging to this class.

Interludes of John Heywood.

Meanwhile, long before the earliest of these dates, the ancient drama had, in other hands, assumed wholly a new form. Mr. Collier appears to consider the Interludes of John Heywood, the earliest of which must have been written before 1521, as first exhibiting the moral-play in a state of transition to the regular tragedy and comedy. "John Heywood's dramatic productions," he says, "almost form a class by themselves: they are neither miracle-plays nor moral-plays, but what may be properly and strictly called interludes, a species of writing of which he has a claim to be considered the inventor, although the term interlude was applied generally to theatrical productions in the reign of Edward IV." A notion of the nature of these compositions

* Hist. of Dramatic Poetry, II. 413.

may be collected from the plot of one of them, A Merry Play betwene the Pardoner and the Frere, the Curate and neighbour Pratte, printed in 1533, of which Mr. Collier gives the following account:—"A pardoner and a friar have each obtained leave of the curate to use his church,—the one for the exhibition of his relics, and the other for the delivery of a sermon—the object of both being the same, that of procuring money. The friar arrives first, and is about to commence his discourse, when the pardoner enters and disturbs him; each is desirous of being heard, and, after many vain attempts by force of lungs, they proceed to force of arms, kicking and cuffing each other unmercifully. The curate, called by the disturbance in his church, endeavours, without avail, to part the combatants; he therefore calls in neighbour Pratte to his assistance, and, while the curate seizes the friar, Pratte undertakes to deal with the pardoner, in order that they may set them in the stocks. It turns out that both the friar and the pardoner are too much for their assailants; and the latter, after a sound drubbing, are glad to come to a composition, by which the former are allowed quietly to depart." * Here, then, we have a dramatic fable, or incident at least, conducted not by allegorical personifications, but by characters of real life, which is the essential difference that distinguishes the true tragedy or comedy from the mere moral. Heywood's interludes, however, of which there are two or three more of the same description with this (besides others partaking more of the allegorical character), are all only single acts, or, more properly, scenes, and exhibit, therefore, nothing more than the mere rudiments or embryo of the regular comedy.

Udall's Ralph Roister Doister.

The earliest English comedy, properly so called, that has yet been discovered, is commonly considered to be that

* Hist. of Dramatic Poetry, II. 386.

of Ralph Roister Doister, the production of Nicholas Udall, an eminent classical scholar in the earlier part of the sixteenth century, and one of the masters, first at Eton, and afterwards at Westminster. Its existence was unknown till a copy was discovered in 1818, which perhaps (for the title-page is gone) was not printed earlier than 1566, in which year Thomas Hackett is recorded in the register of the Stationers' Company to have had a licence for printing a play entitled Rauf Ruyster Duster; but the play is quoted in Thomas Wilson's Rule of Reason, first printed in 1551, so that it must have been written at least fifteen or sixteen years before. * This hypothesis would carry it back to about the same date with the latest of Heywood's interludes; and it certainly was produced while that writer was still alive and in the height of his popularity. It may be observed that Wilson calls Udall's play an interlude, which would therefore seem to have been at this time the common name for any dramatic composition, as, indeed, it appears to have been for nearly a century preceding. The author himself, however, in his prologue, announces it as a Comedy, or Interlude, and as an imitation of the classical models of Plautus and Terence.

And, in truth, both in character and in plot, Ralph Roister Doister has every right to be regarded as a true comedy, showing indeed, in its execution, the rudeness of the age, but in its plan, and in reference to the principle upon which it is constructed, as regular and as complete as any comedy in the language. It is divided into acts and scenes, which very few of the moral-plays are; and, according to Mr. Collier's estimate, the performance could not have been concluded in less time that about two hours and a half, while few of the morals would require more than about an hour for their representation.** The dramatis personæ are thirteen in all, nine male and four female; and the two principal ones at least—Ralph himself, a vain, thoughtless, blustering fellow, whose ultimately baffled

* See Collier, II. 446.

** See Collier, II. 451.

pursuit of the gay and rich widow Custance forms the action of the piece; and his servant, Matthew Merrygreek, a kind of flesh-and-blood representative of the Vice of the old moral-plays—are strongly discriminated, and drawn altogether with much force and spirit. The story is not very ingeniously involved, but it moves forward through its gradual development, and onwards to the catastrophe, in a sufficiently bustling, lively manner; and some of the situations, though the humour is rather farcical than comic, are very cleverly conceived and managed. The language also may be said to be on the whole, racy and characteristic, if not very polished. A few lines from a speech of one of the widow's handmaidens, Tibet Talkapace, in a conversation with her fellow-servants on the approaching marriage of their masters, may be quoted as a specimen:—

> And I heard our Nourse speake of an husbande to-day
> Ready for our mistresse; a rich man and a gay:
> And we shall go in our French hoodes every day;
> In our silke cassocks (I warrant you) freshe and gay;
> In our tricke ferdigews, and billiments of golde,
> Brave in our sutes of chaunge, seven double folde.
> Then shall ye see Tibet, sires, treade the mosse so trimme:
> Nay, why said I treade? ye shall see hir glide and swimme,
> Not lumperdee, clumperdee, like our spaniell Rig.

Gammer Gurton's Needle.

Ralph Roister Doister is in every way a very superior production to Gammer Gurton's Needle, which, before the discovery of Udall's piece, had the credit of being the first regular English comedy. At the same time, it must be admitted that the superior antiquity assigned to Ralph Roister Doister is not very conclusively made out. All that we know with certainty with regard to the date of the play is, that it was in existence in 1551. The oldest edition of Gammer Gurton's Needle is dated 1575: but how long the play may have been composed before that year is uncertain. The title-page of the 1575 edition describes it as "played

on the stage not long ago in Christ's College, in Cambridge;" and Warton, on the authority of a manuscript memorandum by Oldys, the eminent antiquary of the early part of the last century, says that it was written and first printed in 1551. Wright also, in his Historia Histrionica, first printed in 1669, states it as his opinion that it was written in the reign of Edward VI. In refutation of all this it is alleged that "it could not have been produced so early, because John Still (afterwards bishop of Bath and Wells), the author of it, was not born until 1543; and, consequently, in 1552, taking Warton's latest date, would only have been nine years old.* But the evidence that Bishop Still was the Author of Gammer Gurton's Needle is exceedingly slight. The play is merely stated on the title-page to have been "made by Mr. S., Master of Arts;" and even if there was, as is asserted, no other Master of Arts of Christ's College whose name began with S. at the time when this title-page was printed, the author of the play is not stated to have been of that college, nor, if he were, is it necessary to assume that he was living in 1575. On the whole, therefore, while there is no proof that Ralph Roister Doister is older than the year 1551, it is by no means certain that Gammer Gurton's Needle was not written in that same year.

This "right pithy, pleasant, and merie comedie," as it is designated on the title-page, is, like Udall's play, regularly divided into acts and scenes, and, like it too, is written in rhyme—the language and versification being, on the whole, perhaps rather more easy than flowing—a circumstance which, more than any external evidence that has been produced, would incline us to assign it to a somewhat later date. But it is in all respects a very tame and poor performance—the plot, if so it can be called, meagre to insipidity and silliness, the characters only a few slightly distinguished varieties of the lowest life, and the dialogue in general as feeble and undramatic as the merest monotony

* Collier, II. 444.

can make it. Its merriment is of the coarsest and most boisterous description, even where it is not otherwise offensive; but the principal ornament wherewith the author endeavours to enliven his style is a brutal filth and grossness of expression, which is the more astounding when we consider that the piece was the production, in all probability, of a clergyman at least, if not of one who afterwards became a bishop, and that it was certainly represented before a learned and grave university. There is nothing of the same high seasoning in Ralph Roister Doister, though that play seems to have been intended only for the amusement of a common London audience. The Second Act of Gammer Gurton's Needle is introduced by a song,

> I cannot eat but little meat,
> My stomach is not good, &c.

which is the best thing in the whole play, and which is well known from having been quoted by Warton, who describes it as the earliest *chanson à boire*, or drinking ballad, of any merit in the language; and observes that "it has a vein of ease and humour which we should not expect to have been inspired by the simple beverage of those times." But this song is most probably not by the author of the play: it appears to be merely a portion of a popular song of the time, which is found elsewhere complete, and has recently been so printed, from a MS. of the sixteenth century, by Dr. Dyce, in his edition of Skelton.*

Misogonus.

Probably of earlier date than Gammer Gurton's Needle, is another example of the regular drama, which, like Ralph Roister Doister, has been but lately recovered, a play entitled Misogonus, the only copy of which is in manuscript, and

* See Account of Skelton and his Writings, vol. i. pp. 7—9. Mr. Dyce states that the MS. from which he has printed the song is certainly of an earlier date than the oldest-known edition of the play (1575).

is dated 1577. An allusion, however, in the course of the dialogue, would seem to prove that the play must have been composed about the year 1560. To the prologue is appended the name of Thomas Rychardes, who has therefore been assumed to be the author. The play, as contained in the manuscript, consists only of the unusual number of four acts, but the story, nevertheless, appears to be completed. The piece is written throughout in rhyming quatrains, not couplets, and the language would indicate it to be of about the same date with Gammer Gurton's Needle. It contains a song, which for fluency and spirit may very well bear to be compared with the drinking-song in that drama. Neither in the contrivance and conduct of the plot, however, nor in the force with which the characters are exhibited, does it evince the same free and skilful hand with Ralph Roister Doister, although it is interesting for some of the illustrations which it affords of the manners of the time.

Chronicle Histories:—Bale's Kynge Johan; etc.

If the regular drama thus made its first appearance among us in the form of comedy, the tragic muse was at least not far behind. There is some ground for supposing, indeed, that one species of the graver drama of real life may have begun to emerge rather sooner than comedy out of the shadowy world of the old allegorical representations; that namely, which was long distinguished from both comedy and tragedy by the name of History, or Chronicle History, consisting, to adopt Mr. Collier's definition, "of certain passages or events detailed by annalists put into a dramatic form often without regard to the course in which they happened; the author sacrificing chronology, situation, and circumstance, to the superior object of producing an attractive play."* Of what may be called at least the transition from the moral-play to the history, we have an example

* Hist. Dram. Poet. II. p. 414.

in Bale's lately recovered drama of Kynge Johan,* written in all probability some years before the middle of the sixteenth century, in which, while many of the characters are still allegorical abstractions, others are real personages; King John himself, Pope Innocent, Cardinal Pandulphus, Stephen Langton, and other historical figures moving about in odd intermixture with such mere notional spectres as the Widowed Britannia, Imperial Majesty, Nobility, Clergy, Civil Order, Treason, Verity, and Sedition. The play is accordingly described by Mr. Collier, the editor, as occupying an intermediate place between moralities and historical plays; and "it is," he adds, "the only known existing specimen of that species of composition of so early a date."

Tragedy of Gorboduc.—Blank Verse.

But the era of genuine tragedies and historical plays had already commenced some years before these last-mentioned pieces saw the light. On the 18th of January, 1562, was "shown before the Queen's most excellent Majesty," as the old title-pages of the printed play inform us, "in her Highness' Court of Whitehall, by the Gentlemen of the Inner Temple," the Tragedy of Gorboduc, otherwise entitled the Tragedy of Ferrex and Porrex, the production of the same Thomas Sackville who has already engaged our attention as by far the most remarkable writer in The Mirror for Magistrates, and of Thomas Norton, who is said to have been a puritan clergyman, and who had already acquired a poetic reputation, though in a different province of the land of song, as one of the coadjutors of Sternhold and Hopkins in their metrical version of the Psalms. On the title-page of the first edition, printed in 1565, which, however, was surreptitious, it is stated that the three first acts were written by Norton, and the two last by Sackville; and,

** Published by the Camden Society, 4to. 1838, under the care of Mr. Collier.

although this announcement was afterwards withdrawn, it was never expressly contradicted, and it is not improbable that it may have a general foundation of truth. It must be confessed, however, that no change of style gives any indication which it is easy to detect of a succession of hands; and that, judging by this criterion, we should rather be led to infer that, in whatever way the two writers contrived to combine their labours, whether by the one retouching and improving what the other had rough sketched, or by the one taking the quieter and humbler, the other the more impassioned, scenes or portions of the dialogue, they pursued the same method throughout the piece. Charles Lamb expresses himself "willing to believe that Lord Buckhurst supplied the more vital parts."* At the same time he observes that "the style of this old play is stiff and cumbersome, like the dresses of its times;" and that, though there may be flesh and blood underneath, we cannot get at it. In truth, Gorboduc is a drama only in form. In spirit and manner it is wholly undramatic. The story has no dramatic capabilities, no evolution either of action or of character, although it affords some opportunities for description and eloquent declamation; neither was there anything of specially dramatic aptitude in the genius of Sackville (to whom we may safely attribute whatever is most meritorious in the composition), any more than there would appear to have been in Spenser or in Milton, illustrious as they both stand in the front line of the poets of their country and of the world. Gorboduc, accordingly, is a most unaffecting and uninteresting tragedy; as would also be the noblest book of the Fairy Queen or of Paradise Lost—the portion of either poem that soars the highest—if it were to be attempted to be transformed into a drama by merely being divided into acts and scenes, and cut up into the outward semblance of dialogue. In whatever abundance all else of poetry might be outpoured, the spirit of dialogue and of dramatic action would not be there. Gorboduc, however,

* Specimens of Eng. Dram. Poets, 1. 6 (edit. of 1835).

though a dull play, is in some other respects a remarkable production for the time. The language is not dramatic, but it is throughout singularly correct, easy, and perspicuous; in many parts it is even elevated and poetical; and there are some passages of strong painting not unworthy of the hand to which we owe the Induction to the Legend of the Duke of Buckingham in the Mirror for Magistrates. The piece has accordingly won much applause in quarters where there was little feeling of the true spirit of dramatic writing as the exposition of passion in action, and where the chief thing demanded in a tragedy was a certain orderly pomp of expression, and monotonous respectability of sentiment, to fill the ear, and tranquillize rather than excite and disturb the mind. One peculiarity of the more ancient national drama retained in Gorboduc is the introduction, before every act, of a piece of machinery called the Dumb Show, in which was shadowed forth, by a sort of allegorical exhibition, the part of the story that was immediately to follow. This custom survived on the English stage down to a considerably later date: the reader may remember that Shakespeare, though he rejected it in his own dramas, has introduced the play acted before the King and Queen in Hamlet by such a prefigurative dumb show.*

Another expedient, which Shakespeare has also on two occasions made use of, namely, the assistance of a chorus, is also adopted in Gorboduc: but rather by way of mere decoration, and to keep the stage from being at any time empty, as in the old Greek drama, than to carry forward or

* Besides the original 1565 edition of Gorboduc, there was another in 1569 or 1570, and a third in 1590. It was again reprinted in 1736; and it has also appeared in all the editions of Dodsley's Old Plays, 1744, 1780, and 1825. It has now been edited for the Shakespearian Society by Mr. W. D. Cooper, in the same volume with Ralph Roister Doister. Mr. Cooper has shown that the edition of 1590 was not, as had been supposed, an exact reprint of that of 1565. He has also given us elaborate biographies both of Norton and of Sackville, in the latter of which he has shown that Sackville, who died suddenly at the Council-table in 1608, was born in 1536, and not in 1527, as commonly supposed.

even to explain the action, as in Henry the Fifth and Pericles. It consists, to quote the description given by Warton, "of Four Ancient and Sage Men of Britain, who regularly close every act, the last excepted, with an ode in the long-lined stanzas, drawing back the attention of the audience to the substance of what has just passed, and illustrating it by recapitulatory moral reflections and poetical or historical allusions." * These effusions of the chorus are all in rhyme, as being intended to be of the same lyrical character with those in the Greek plays; but the dialogue in the rest of the piece is in blank verse, of the employment of which in dramatic composition it affords the earliest known instance in the language. The first modern experiment in this "strange metre," as it was then called, had, as has already been noticed, been made only a few years before by Lord Surrey, in his translation of the Second and Fourth Books of the Æneid, which was published in 1557, but must have been written more than ten years before, Surrey having been put to death in January, 1547. In the mean time the new species of verse had been cultivated in several original compositions by Nicholas Grimoald, from whom, in the opinion of Warton, the rude model exhibited by Surrey received "new strength, elegance, and modulation." ** Grimoald's pieces in blank verse were first printed in 1557, along with Surrey's translation, in Tottel's collection entitled Songs and Sonnets of Uncertain Authors; and we are not aware that there was any more English blank verse written or given to the world till the production of Gorboduc. In that case, Sackville would stand as our third writer in this species of verse; in the use of which also, he may be admitted to have surpassed Grimoald fully as much as the latter improved upon Surrey. Indeed, it may be said to have been Gorboduc that really established blank verse in the language; for its employment from the time of the appearance of that tragedy became common in dramatic composition, while in other kinds of poetry, notwithstanding

* Hist. of Eng. Poet. iv. 181. ** Ibid. iii. 346.

two or three early attempts, it never made head against rhyme, nor acquired any popularity, till it was brought into repute by the Paradise Lost, published a full century after Sackville's play. Even in dramatic composition the use of blank verse appears to have been for some time confined to pieces not intended for popular representation.

Other Early Dramas.

Among the very few original plays of this period that have come down to us is one entitled Damon and Pytheas, which was acted before the queen at Christ Church, Oxford, in September, 1566, the production of Richard Edwards, who, in the general estimation of his contemporaries, seems to have been accounted the greatest dramatic genius of his day, at least in the comic style. His Damon and Pytheas does not justify their laudation to a modern taste; it is a mixture of comedy and tragedy, between which it would be hard to decide whether the grave writing or the gay is the rudest and dullest. The play is in rhyme, but some variety is produced by the measure or length of the line being occasionally changed. Mr. Collier thinks that the notoriety Edwards attained may probably have been in great part owing to the novelty of his subjects; Damon and Pytheas being one of the earliest attempts to bring stories from profane history upon the English stage. Edwards, however, besides his plays, wrote many other things in verse, some of which have an ease, and even an elegance, that neither Surrey himself nor any other writer of that age has excelled. Most of these shorter compositions are contained in the miscellany called the Paradise of Dainty Devices, which, indeed, is stated on the title-page to have been "devised and written for the most part" by Edwards, who had, however, been dead ten years when the first edition appeared in 1576. Among them are the very beautiful and tender lines, which have been often reprinted, in illustration of Terence's apophthegm,—

"Amantium iræ amoris redintegratio est:"

or, as it is here rendered in the burthen of each stanza,—

"The falling out of faithful friends renewing is of love."

Edwards, who, towards the end of his life, was appointed one of the gentlemen of the Chapel Royal and master of the queen's singing-boys, "united," says Warton, "all those arts and accomplishments which minister to popular pleasantry: he was the first fiddle, the most fashionable sonnetteer, the readiest rhymer, and the most facetious mimic, of the court."* Another surviving play produced during this interval is the Tragedy of Tancred and Gismund, founded upon Boccaccio's well-known story, which was presented before Elizabeth at the Inner Temple in 1568, the five acts of which it consists being severally written by five gentlemen of the society, of whom one, the author of the third act, was Christopher Hatton, afterwards the celebrated dancing lord chancellor. The play, however, was not printed till 1592, when Robert Wilmot, the writer of the fifth act gave it to the world, as the title-page declares, "newly revived, and polished according to the decorum of these days." The meaning of this announcement, Mr. Collier conceives to be, that the piece was in the first instance composed in rhyme; but, rhymed plays having by the year 1592 gone out of fashion even on the public stage, Wilmot's reviving and polishing consisted chiefly in cutting off many of the "tags to the lines," or turning them differently. The tragedy of Tancred and Gismund, which, like Gorboduc, has a dumb show at the commencement and a chorus at the close of every act, is, he observes, "the earliest English play extant the plot of which is known to be derived from an Italian novel."** To this earliest stage in the history of the regular drama belong, finally, some plays translated or adapted from the ancient and from foreign languages, which doubtless also contributed to excite and give an impulse to the national taste and genius in this department.

* Hist. of Eng. Poet. iv. 110. ** Hist. Dram. Poet. iii. 13.

Second Stage of the Regular Drama:—Peele; Greene.

It thus appears that numerous pieces entitled by their form to be accounted as belonging to the regular drama had been produced before the year 1580; but nevertheless no dramatic work had yet been written which can be said to have taken its place in our literature, or to have almost any interest for succeeding generations on account of its intrinsic merits and apart from its mere antiquity. The next ten years disclose a new scene. Within that space a crowd of dramatists arose whose writings still form a portion of our living poetry, and present the regular drama, no longer only painfully struggling into the outward shape proper to that species of composition, but having the breath of life breathed into it, and beginning to throb and stir with the pulsations of genuine passion. We can only here shortly notice some of the chief names in this numerous company of our early dramatists, properly so called. One to whom much attention has been recently directed is George Peele, the first of whose dramatic productions, The Arraignment of Paris, a sort of masque or pageant which had been represented before the queen, was printed anonymously in 1584. But Peele's most celebrated drama is his Love of King David and Fair Bethsabe, first published in 1599, two or three years after the author's death. This play Mr. Campbell has called "the earliest fountain of pathos and harmony that can be traced in our dramatic poetry;" and he adds, "there is no such sweetness of versification and imagery to be found in our blank verse anterior to Shakespeare." * David and Bethsabe was, in all probability, written not anterior to Shakespeare, but after he had been at least six or seven years a writer for the stage, and had produced perhaps ten or twelve of his plays, including some of those in which, to pass over all other and higher things,

* Spec. of Eng. Poet. I. 140.

the music of the verse has ever been accounted the most perfect and delicious. We know at least that The Midsummer Night's Dream, Romeo and Juliet, The Merchant of Venice, Richard II., King John, and Richard III., were all written and acted, if not all printed, before Peele's play was given to the world. But, independently of this consideration, it must be admitted that the best of Peele's blank verse, though smooth and flowing, and sometimes tastefully decorated with the embellishments of a learned and imitative fancy, is both deficient in richness or even variety of modulation, and without any pretensions to the force and fire of original poetic genius. Contemporary with Peele was Robert Greene, the author of five plays, besides one written in conjunction with a friend. Greene died in 1592, and he appears only to have begun to write for the stage about 1587. Mr. Collier thinks that, in facility of expression, and in the flow of his blank verse, he is not to be placed below Peele. But Greene's most characteristic attribute is his turn for merriment, of which Peele in his dramatic productions shows little or nothing. His comedy, or farce rather, is no doubt usually coarse enough, but the turbid stream flows at least freely and abundantly. Among his plays is a curious one on the subject of the History of Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, which is supposed to have been written in 1588 or 1589, though first published in 1594. This, however, is not so much a story of diablerie as of mere legerdemain, mixed, like all the rest of Greene's pieces with a good deal of farcical incident and dialogue; even the catastrophe, in which one of the characters is carried off to hell, being so managed as to impart no supernatural interest to the drama.

Marlow.

Of a different and far higher order of poetical and dramatic character is another play of this date upon a similar

subject, the Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus, by Christopher Marlow. Marlow died at an early age in 1593, the year after Greene, and three or four years before Peele. He had been a writer for the stage at least since 1586, in which year, or before, was brought out the play of Tamburlaine the Great, his claim to the authorship of which has been conclusively established by Mr. Collier, who has further shown that this was the first play written in blank verse that was exhibited on the public stage.* "Marlow's mighty line" has been celebrated by Ben Jonson in his famous verses on Shakespeare; but Drayton, the author of the Polyolbion, has extolled him in the most glowing description,—in words the most worthy of the theme:—

> Next Marlow, bathed in the Thespian springs,
> Had in him those brave translunary things
> That the first poets had: his raptures were
> All air and fire, which made his verses clear:
> For that fine madness still he did retain,
> Which rightly should possess a poet's brain.**

Marlow is, by nearly universal admission, our greatest dramatic writer before Shakespeare. He is frequently, indeed, turgid and bombastic, especially in his earliest play, Tamburlaine the Great, which has just been mentioned, where his fire, it must be confessed, sometimes blazes out of all bounds and becomes a mere wasting conflagration—sometimes only raves in a furious storm of sound, filling the ear without any other effect. But in his fits of truer inspiration, all the magic of terror, pathos, and beauty flashes from him in streams. The gradual accumulation of the agonies of Faustus, in the concluding scene of that play, as the moment of his awful fate comes nearer and nearer, powerfully drawn as it is, is far from being one of those coarse pictures of wretchedness that merely oppress us with horror: the most admirable skill is applied throughout in balancing that emotion by sympathy and even respect for the sufferer,—

* Hist. Dram. Poet. III. pp. 107—126.

** Elegy, "To my dearly beloved friend Henry Reynolds, Of Poets and Poesy."

——for he was a scholar once admired
For wondrous knowledge in our German schools,—

and yet without disturbing our acquiescence in the justice of his doom; till we close the book, saddened, indeed, but not dissatisfied, with the pitying but still tributary and almost consoling words of the Chorus on our hearts,—

Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight,
And burned is Apollo's laurel-bough
That sometime grew within this learned man.

Still finer, perhaps, is the conclusion of another of Marlow's dramas—his tragedy of Edward the Second. "The reluctant pangs of abdicating royalty in Edward," says Charles Lamb, "furnished hints which Shakespeare scarce improved in his Richard the Second; and the death-scene of Marlow's king moves pity and terror beyond any scene, ancient or modern, with which I am acquainted."* Much splendour of poetry, also, is expended upon the delineation of Barabas, in The Rich Jew of Malta; but Marlow's Jew, as Lamb has observed, "does not approach so near to Shakespeare's [in the Merchant of Venice] as his Edward the Second." We are more reminded of some of Barabas's speeches by the magnificent declamation of Mammon in Jonson's Alchymist.

Lyly; Kyd; Lodge.

Marlow, Greene, and Peele are the most noted names among those of our dramatists who belong exclusively to the age of Elizabeth; but some others that have less modern celebrity may perhaps be placed at least on the same line with the two latter. John Lyly, the Euphuist, as he is called, from one of his prose works, which will be noticed presently, is, as a poet, in his happiest efforts, elegant and fanciful; but his genius was better suited for the lighter kinds of lyric poetry than for the drama. He is the author of nine dramatic pieces, but of these seven are in prose, and only one in

* Spec. of Eng. Dram. Poets, I. 31.

rhyme and one in blank verse. All of them, according to Mr. Collier, "seem to have been written for court entertainments, although they were also performed at theatres, most usually by the children of St. Paul's and the Revels." They were fitter, it might be added, for beguiling the listlessness of courts than for the entertainment of a popular audience, athirst for action and passion, and very indifferent to mere ingenuities of style. All poetical readers, however, remember some songs and other short pieces of verse with which some of them are interspersed, particularly a delicate little anacreontic in that entitled Alexander and Campaspe, beginning—

> Cupid and my Campaspe played
> At cards for kisses, &c.

Mr. Collier observes that Malone must have spoken from a very superficial acquaintance with Lyly's works when he contends that his plays are comparatively free from those affected conceits and remote allusions that characterise most of his other productions. Thomas Kyd, the author of the two plays of Jeronimo and the Spanish Tragedy (which is a continuation of the former), besides a translation of another piece from the French, appears to be called Sporting Kyd by Jonson, in his verses on Shakespeare, in allusion merely to his name. There is, at least, nothing particularly sportive in the little that has come down to us from his pen. Kyd was a considerable master of language; but his rank as a dramatist is not very easily settled, seeing that there is much doubt as to his claims to the authorship of by far the most striking passages in the Spanish Tragedy, the best of his two plays. Lamb, quoting the scenes in question, describes them as "the very salt of the old play," which, without them, he adds, "is but a *caput mortuum*." It has been generally assumed that they were added by Ben Jonson, who certainly was employed to make some additions to this play; and Mr. Collier attributes them to him as if the point did not admit of a doubt—acknowledging, however,

that they represent Jonson in a new light, and that "certainly there is nothing in his own entire plays equalling in pathetic beauty some of his contributions to the Spanish Tragedy." Nevertheless, it does not seem to be perfectly clear that the supposed contributions by another hand might not have been the work of Kyd himself. Lamb says, "There is nothing in the undoubted plays of Jonson which would authorise us to suppose that he could have supplied the scenes in question. I should suspect the agency of some 'more potent spirit.' Webster might have furnished them. They are full of that wild, solemn, preternatural cast of grief which bewilders us in the Duchess of Malfy." The last of these early dramatists we shall notice, Thomas Lodge, who was born about 1556, and began to write for the stage about 1580, is placed by Mr. Collier "in a rank superior to Greene, but in some respects inferior to Kyd." His principal dramatic work is entitled The Wounds of Civil War, lively set forth in the true Tragedies of Marius and Sylla; and is written in blank verse with a mixture of rhyme. It shows him, Mr. Collier thinks, to have unquestionably the advantage over Kyd as a drawer of character, though not equalling that writer in general vigour, and boldness of poetic conception. His blank verse is also much more monotonous than that of Kyd. Another strange drama in rhyme, written by Lodge in conjunction with Greene, is entitled A Looking-glass for London and England, and has for its object to put down the puritanical outcry against the immorality of the stage, which it attempts to accomplish by a grotesque application to the city of London of the Scriptural story of Nineveh. The whole performance, in Mr. Collier's opinion, "is wearisomely dull, although the authors have endeavoured to lighten the weight by the introduction of scenes of drunken buffoonery between 'a clown and his crew of ruffians,' and between the same clown and a person disguised as the devil, in order to frighten him, but who is detected and well beaten." Mr. Hallam, however, pronounces that there is great talent shown in this play, "though

upon a very strange canvass."* Lodge, who was an eminent physician, has left a considerable quantity of other poetry besides his plays, partly in the form of novels or tales, partly in shorter pieces, many of which may be found in the miscellany called England's Helicon, from which a few of them have been extracted by Mr. Ellis, in his Specimens. They are, perhaps, on the whole, more creditable to his poetical powers than his dramatic performances. He is also the author of several short works in prose, sometimes interspersed with verse. One of his prose tales, first printed in 1590, under the title of Rosalynde: Euphues' Golden Legacie, found in his cell at Silextra (for Lodge was one of Lyly's imitators), is famous as the source from which Shakespeare appears to have taken the story of his As You Like It. "Of this production it may be said," observes Mr. Collier, "that our admiration of many portions of it will not be diminished by a comparison with the work of our great dramatist."**

It is worthy of remark, that all these founders and first builders-up of the regular drama in England were, nearly if not absolutely without an exception, classical scholars and men who had received a university education. Nicholas Udall was of Corpus Christi College, Oxford; John Still (if he is to be considered the author of Gammer Gurton's Needle) was of Christ's College, Cambridge; Sackville was educated at both universities; so was Gascoigne; Richard Edwards was of Corpus Christi, Oxford; Marlow was of Benet College, Cambridge; Greene, of St. John's, Cambridge; Peele, of Christ's Church, Oxford; Lyly, of Magdalen College, and Lodge of Trinity College, in the same university. Kyd was also probably a university man, though we know nothing of his private history. To the training received by these writers the drama that arose among us after the middle of the sixteenth century may be considered to owe not only its

* Literature of Eur. II. 274.

** Hist. of Dram. Poet. III. 213.—See upon this subject the Introductory Notice to As You Like It in Knight's Shakspere, vol. III. 247—265.

form, but in part also its spirit, which had a learned and classical tinge from the first, that never entirely wore out. The diction of the works of all these dramatists betrays their scholarship; and they have left upon the language of our higher drama, and indeed of our blank verse in general, of which they were the main creators, an impress of Latinity, which, it can scarcely be doubted, our vigorous but still homely and unsonorous Gothic speech needed to fit it for the requirements of that species of composition. Fortunately, however, the greatest and most influential of them were not mere men of books and readers of Greek and Latin. Greene and Peele and Marlow all spent the noon of their days (none of them saw any afternoon) in the busiest haunts of social life, sounding in their reckless course all the depths of human experience, and drinking the cup of passion, and also of suffering, to the dregs. And of their great successors, those who carried the drama to its height among us in the next age, while some were also accomplished scholars, all were men of the world—men who knew their brother-men by an actual and intimate intercourse with them in their most natural and open-hearted moods, and over a remarkably extended range of conditions. We know, from even the scanty fragments of their history that have come down to us, that Shakespeare and Jonson and Beaumont and Fletcher all lived much in the open air of society, and mingled with all ranks from the highest to the lowest; some of them, indeed, having known what it was actually to belong to classes very far removed from each other at different periods of their lives. But we should have gathered, though no other record or tradition had told us, that they must have been men of this genuine and manifold experience from the drama alone which they have bequeathed to us,—various, rich, and glowing as that is, even as life itself.

Earlier Elizabethan Prose:—Lyly; Sidney; Spenser; Nash; etc.

Before leaving the earlier part of the reign of Elizabeth, a few of the more remarkable writers in prose who had risen into notice before the year 1590 may be mentioned. The singular affectation known by the name of *Euphuism* was, like some other celebrated absurdities, the invention of a man of true genius—John Lyly, noticed above as a dramatist and poet—the first part of whose prose romance of Euphues appeared in 1578 or 1579. "Our nation," says Sir Henry Blount, in the preface to a collection of some of Lyly's dramatic pieces which he published in 1632, "are in his debt for a new English which he taught them. Euphues and his England* began first that language; all our ladies were then his scholars; and that beauty in court which could not parley Euphuism—that is to say, who was unable to converse in that pure and reformed English, which he had formed his work to be the standard of—was as little regarded as she which now there speaks not French." Some notion of this "pure and reformed English" has been made familiar to the reader of our day by the great modern pen that has called back to life so much of the long-vanished past, though the discourse of Sir Piercie Shafton in the Monastery, is rather a caricature than a fair sample of Euphuism. Doubtless, it often became a purely silly and pitiable affair in the mouths of the courtiers, male and female; but in Lyly's own writings, and in those of his lettered imitators, of whom he had several, and some of no common talent, it was only fantastic and extravagant, and opposed to truth, nature, good sense, and manliness. Pedantic and far-fetched allusion, elaborate indirectness, a cloying smoothness and drowsy monotony of diction, alliteration, punning, and other such puerilities,—these are the main ingredients of Euphuism; which do not,

* This is the title of the second part of the Euphues, published in 1581. The first part is entitled Euphues, the Anatomy of Wit.

however, exclude a good deal of wit, fancy, and prettiness, occasionally, both in the expression and the thought. Although Lyly, in his verse as well as in his prose, is always artificial to excess, his ingenuity and finished elegance are frequently very captivating. Perhaps, indeed, our language is, after all, indebted to this writer and his Euphuism for not a little of its present euphony. From the strictures Shakespeare, in Love's Labour's Lost, makes Holofernes pass on the mode of speaking of his Euphuist, Don Adriano de Armado—"a man of fire-new words, fashion's own knight—that hath a mint of phrases in his brain—one whom the music of his own vain tongue doth ravish like enchanting harmony"—it should almost seem that the now universally adopted pronunciation of many of our words was first introduced by such persons at this refining "child of fancy:"—"I abhor such fanatical fantasms, such insociable and point-device companions; such rackers of orthography as to speak *dout*, fine, when he should say *doubt; det*, when he should pronounce *debt*, *d*, *e*, *b*, *t;* not *d*, *e*, *t:* he clepeth a *calf*, *cauf; half*, *hauf; neighbour* vocatur *nebour*; *neigh*, abbreviated *ne;* this is abhominable (which he would call *abominable*): it insinuateth me of insanie." Here, however, the all-seeing poet laughs rather at the pedantic schoolmaster than at the fantastic knight; and the euphuistic pronunciation which he makes Holofernes so indignantly criticise was most probably his own and that of the generality of his educated contemporaries.

A renowned English prose classic of this age, who made Lyly's affectations the subject of his ridicule some years before Shakespeare, but who also perhaps was not blind to his better qualities, and did not disdain to adopt some of his reforms in the language, if not to imitate even some of the peculiarities of his style, was Sir Philip Sidney, the illustrious author of the Arcadia. Sidney, who was born in 1554, does not appear to have sent anything to the press during his short and brilliant life, which was terminated by the wound he received at the battle of Zutphen, in 1586; but he was probably well known, nevertheless, at least as a writer of

poetry, some years before his lamented death. Puttenham, whose Art of English Poesy, at whatever time it may have been written, was published before any work of Sidney's had been printed, so far as can now be discovered, mentions him as one of the best and most famous writers of the age "for eclogue and pastoral poesy." The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia, as Sidney's principal work had been affectionately designated by himself, in compliment to his sister, to whom it was inscribed—the "fair, and good, and learned" lady, afterwards celebrated by Ben Jonson as "the subject of all verse"—was not given to the world even in part till 1590, nor completely till 1593. His collection of sonnets and songs entitled Astrophel and Stella first appeared in 1591, and his other most celebrated piece in prose, The Defence of Poesy, in 1595. The production in which he satirises the affectation and pedantry of the modern corrupters of the vernacular tongue is a sort of masque, supposed to pass before Queen Elizabeth in Wanstead garden, in which, among other characters, a village schoolmaster called Rombus appears, and declaims in a jargon not unlike that of Shakespeare's Holofernes. Sidney's own prose is the most flowing and poetical that had yet been written in English; but its graces are rather those of artful elaboration than of a vivid natural expressiveness. The thought, in fact, is generally more poetical than the language; it is a spirit of poetry encased in a rhetorical form. Yet, notwithstanding the conceits into which it frequently runs—and which, after all, are mostly rather the frolics of a nimble wit, somewhat too solicitous of display, than the sickly perversities of a coxcombical or effeminate taste—and, notwithstanding also some want of animation and variety, Sidney's is a wonderful style, always flexible, harmonious, and luminous, and on fit occasions rising to great stateliness and splendour; while a breath of beauty and noble feeling lives in and exhales from the whole of his great work, like the fragrance from a garden of flowers.

Among the most active occasional writers in prose, also, about this time were others of the poets and dramatists of

the day, besides Lodge, who has been already mentioned as one of Lyly's imitators. Another of his productions, besides his tale of Rosalynd, which has lately attracted much attention is a Defence of Stage Plays, which he published, probably in 1579, in answer to Stephen Gosson's School of Abuse, and of which only two copies are known to exist, both wanting the title-page. Greene was an incessant pamphleteer upon all sorts of subjects; the list of his prose publications, so far as they are known, given by Mr. Dyce extends to between thirty and forty articles, the earliest being dated 1584, or eight years before his death. Morality, fiction, satire, blackguardism, are all mingled together in the stream that thus appears to have flowed without pause from his ready pen. "In a night and a day," says his friend Nash, "would he have yarked up a pamphlet as well as in seven years; and glad was that printer that might be so blest to pay him dear for the very dregs of his wit."* His wit, indeed, often enough appears to have run to the dregs, nor is it very sparkling at the best; but Greene's prose, though not in general very animated, is more concise and perspicuous than his habits of composition might lead us to expect. He has generally written from a well-informed or full mind, and the matter is interesting even when there is no particular attraction in the manner. Among his most curious pamphlets are his several tracts on the rogueries of London, which he describes under the name of Coney-catching—a favourite subject also with other popular writers of that day. But the most remarkable of all Greene's contributions to our literature are his various publications which either directly relate or are understood to shadow forth the history of his own wild and unhappy life—his tale entitled Never too Late; or, A Powder of Experience, 1590; the second part entitled Francesco's Fortunes, the same year; his Groatsworth of Wit, bought with a Million of Repentance, and The Repentance of Robert Greene, Master of Arts, which both appeared, after his death, in 1592. Greene, as

* Strange News, in answer to Gabriel Harvey's Four Letters.

well as Lodge, we may remark, is to be reckoned among the Euphuists; a tale which he published in 1587, and which was no less than five times reprinted in the course of the next half-century, is entitled Menaphon; Camilla's Alarum to slumbering Euphues, in his melancholy cell at Silexedra, &c.; and the same year he produced Euphues his Censure to Philantus; wherein is presented a philosophical combat between Hector and Achilles, &c. But he does not appear to have persisted in this fashion of style. It may be noticed as curiously illustrating the spirit and manner of our fictitious literature at this time, that in his Pandosto, or, History of Dorastus and Fawnia, Greene, a scholar, and a Master of Arts of Cambridge, does not hesitate to make Bohemia an island, just as is done by Shakespeare in treating the same story in his Winter's Tale. The critics have been accustomed to instance this as one of the evidences of Shakespeare's ignorance, and Ben Jonson is recorded to have, in his conversation with Drummond of Hawthornden, quoted it as a proof that his great brother-dramatist "wanted art,* and sometimes sense." The truth is, as has been observed,** such deviations from fact, and other incongruities of the same character, were not minded, or attempted to be avoided, either in the romantic drama, or in the legends out of which it was formed. They are not blunders, but part and parcel of the fiction. The making Bohemia an island is not nearly so great a violation of geographical truth as other things in the same play are of all the proprieties and possibilities of chronology and history—for instance, the coexistence of a kingdom of Bohemia at all, or of that modern barbaric name, with anything so entirely belonging to the old classic world as the Oracle of Delphi. The story (though no earlier record of it has yet been discovered) is not improbably much older than either Shakespeare or Greene:

* Yet Jonson has elsewhere expressly commended Shakespeare for his art. See his well-known verses prefixed to the first folio edition of the Plays.

** See Notice on the Costume of the Winter's Tale in Knight's Shakspere, vol. IV.

the latter no doubt expanded and adorned it, and mainly gave it its present shape; but it is most likely that he had for his groundwork some rude popular legend or tradition, the characteristic middle age geography and chronology of which he most properly did not disturb.

But the most brilliant pamphleteer of this age was Thomas Nash. Nash is the author of one slight dramatic piece, mostly in blank verse, but partly in prose, and having also some lyrical poetry interspersed, called Summer's Last Will and Testament, which was exhibited before Queen Elizabeth at Nonsuch in 1592; and he also assisted Marlow in his Tragedy of Dido, Queen of Carthage, which, although not printed till 1594, is supposed to have been written before 1590. But his satiric was of a much higher order than his dramatic talent. There never perhaps was poured forth such a rushing and roaring torrent of wit, ridicule, and invective, as in the rapid succession of pamphlets which he published in the course of the year 1589 against the Puritans and their famous champion (or rather knot of champions) taking the name of Martin Mar-Prelate; unless in those in which he began two years after to assail poor Gabriel Harvey, his persecution of and controversy with whom lasted a much longer time—till indeed the Archbishop of Canterbury (Whitgift) interfered in 1597 to restore the peace of the realm by an order that all Harvey's and Nash's books should be taken wherever they might be found, "and that none of the said books be ever printed hereafter." Mr. D'Israeli has made both these controversies familiar to modern readers by his lively accounts of the one in his Quarrels, of the other in his Calamities, of Authors; and ample specimens of the criminations and recriminations hurled at one another by Nash and Harvey have also been given by Mr. Dyce in the Life of Greene prefixed to his edition of that writer's dramatic and poetical works. Harvey too was a man of eminent talent; but it was of a kind very different from that of Nash. Nash's style is remarkable for its airiness and facility; clear it of its old spelling, and, unless it be for a few words and idioms

which have now dropt out of the popular speech, it has quite a modern air. This may show, by-the-by, that the language has not altered so much since the latter part of the sixteenth century as the ordinary prose of that day would lead us to suppose; the difference is rather that the generality of writers were more pedantic then than now, and sought, in a way that is no longer the fashion, to brocade their composition with what were called ink-horn terms, and outlandish phrases never used except in books. If they had been satisfied to write as they spoke, the style of that day (as we may perceive from the example of Nash) would have in its general character considerably more resembled that of the present. Gabriel Harvey's mode of writing exhibits all the peculiarities of his age in their most exaggerated form. He was a great scholar—and his composition is inspired by the very genius of pedantry; full of matter, full often of good sense, not unfrequently rising to a tone of dignity, and even eloquence, but always stiff, artificial and elaborately unnatural to a degree which was even then unusual. We may conceive what sort of chance such a heavy-armed combatant, encumbered and oppressed by the very weapons he carried, would have in a war of wit with the quick, elastic, inexhaustible Nash, and the showering jokes and sarcasms that flashed from his easy, natural pen. Harvey, too, with all his merits, was both vain and envious; and he had some absurdities which afforded tempting game for satire.

Edmund Spenser.

Edmund Spenser has been supposed to have come before the world as a poet so early as the year 1569, when some sonnets translated from Petrarch, which long afterwards were reprinted with his name, appeared in Vander Noodt's Theatre of Worldlings: on the 20th of May in that year he was entered a sizar of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge; and in that same year, also, an entry in the Books of the

Treasurer of the Queen's Chamber records that there was "paid upon a bill signed by Mr. Secretary, dated at Windsor 18° Octobris, to Edmund Spenser, that brought letters to the Queen's Majesty from Sir Henry Norris, Knight, her Majesty's ambassador in France, being at Thouars in the said realm, for his charges the sum of *6l.* 13*s.* 4*d.*, over and besides *9l.* prested to him by Sir Henry Norris."* It has been supposed that this entry refers to the poet. The date 1510, given as that of the year of his birth upon his monument in Westminster Abbey, erected long after his death, is out of the question; but the above-mentioned facts make it probable that he was born some years before 1553, the date commonly assigned.

He has himself commemorated the place of his birth: "At length," he says in his Prothalamion, or poem on the marriages of the two daughters of the Earl of Worcester,

> At length they all to merry London came,
> To merry London, my most kindly nurse,
> That to me gave this life's first native source,
> Though from another place I take my name,
> An house of ancient fame.

It is commonly said, on the authority of Oldys, that he was born in East Smithfield by the Tower. It appears from the register of the University that he took his degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1572, and that of Master of Arts in 1576. On leaving Cambridge he retired for some time to the north of England. Here he appears to have written the greater part of his Shepherd's Calendar, which, having previously come up to London, he published in 1579. In the beginning of August, 1580, on the appointment of Arthur Lord Grey of Wilton as Lord Deputy of Ireland, he accompanied his lordship to that country as his secretary; in March, the year following, he was appointed to the office of Clerk in the Irish Court of Chancery; but on Lord Grey being recalled in 1582 Spenser probably returned with him to England.

* First published in Mr. Cunningham's Introduction (p. xxx.) to his Extracts from the Accounts of the Revels at Court, printed for the Shakespeare Society, 8vo. Lond. 1842.

Of how he was employed for the next three or four years nothing is known; but in 1586 he obtained from the crown a grant of above 3000 acres of forfeited lands in Ireland: the grant is dated the 27th of July, and, if it was procured, as is not improbable, through Sir Philip Sidney, it was the last kindness of that friend and patron, whose death took place in October of this year. Spenser proceeded to Ireland to take possession of his estate, which was a portion of the former domain of the Earl of Desmond in the county of Cork; and here he remained, residing in what had been the earl's castle of Kilcolman, till he returned to England in 1590, and published at London, in 4to., the first three Books of his Fairy Queen. If he had published anything else since the Shepherd's Calendar appeared eleven years before, it could only have been a poem of between four and five hundred lines, entitled Muiopotmos, or the Fate of the Butterfly, which he dedicated to the Lady Carey. He has himself related, in his Colin Clout's Come Home Again, how he had been visited in his exile by the Shepherd of the Ocean, by which designation he means Sir Walter Raleigh, and persuaded by him to make this visit to England for the purpose of having his poem printed. Raleigh introduced him to Elizabeth, to whom the Fairy Queen was dedicated, and who in February, 1591, bestowed on the author a pension of 50*l*. This great work immediately raised Spenser to such celebrity, that the publisher hastened to collect whatever of his other poems he could find, and, under the general title of Complaints; Containing sundry small poems of the World's Vanity; printed together, in a 4to. volume, The Ruins of Time, The Tears of the Muses, Virgil's Gnat, Mother Hubberd's Tale, The Ruins of Rome (from the French of Bellay), Muiopotmos (which is stated to be the only one of the pieces that had previously appeared), and The Visions of Petrarch, &c., already mentioned. Many more, it is declared, which the author had written in former years were not to be found.

Spenser appears to have remained in England till the be-

ginning of the year 1592: his Daphnaida, an elegy on the death of Douglas Howard, daughter of Lord Howard, and wife of Arthur Gorges, Esq., is dedicated to the Marchioness of Northampton in an address dated the 1st of January in that year, and it was published soon after. He then returned to Ireland, and, probably in the course of 1592 and 1593, there composed the series of eighty-eight sonnets in which he relates his courtship of the lady whom he at last married,* celebrating the event by a splendid Epithalamion. But it appears from the eightieth sonnet that he had already finished six Books of his Fairy Queen. His next publication was another 4to. volume which appeared in 1595, containing his Colin Clout's Come Home Again, the dedication of which to Raleigh is dated "From my house at Kilcolman, December the 27th, 1591," no doubt a misprint for 1594; and also his Astrophel, an elegy upon Sir Philip Sidney, dedicated to his widow, now the Countess of Essex: together with The Mourning Muse of Thestylis, another poem on the same subject. The same year appeared, in 8vo., his sonnets, under the title of Amoretti, accompanied by the Epithalamion. In 1596 he paid another visit to England, bringing with him the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Books of his Fairy Queen, which were published, along with a new edition of the preceding three books, in 4to., at London in that year. In the latter part of the same year appeared, in a volume of the same form, a reprint of this Daphnaida, together with his Prothalamion, or spousal verse on the marriages of the Ladies Elizabeth and Catharine Somerset, and his Four Hymns in honour of Love, of Beauty, of Heavenly Love, and of Heavenly Beauty, dedicated to the Countesses of Cumberland and Warwick, in an address dated Greenwich, the 1st of September, 1596. The first two of these Hymns he states had been composed in the

* She was not, as has been commonly assumed, a peasant girl, but evidently a gentlewoman, a person of the same social position with Spenser himself. I have shown this, for the first time, in Spenser and his Poetry, vol. III. pp. 223, &c.

greener times of his youth; and, although he had been moved by one of the two ladies to call in the same, as "having too much pleased those of like age and disposition, which, being too vehemently carried with that kind of affection, do rather suck out poison to their strong passion than honey to their honest delight," he "had been unable so to do, by reason that many copies thereof were formerly scattered abroad." At this time it was still common for literary compositions of all kinds to be extensively circulated in manuscript, as used to be the mode of publication before the invention of printing. These Hymns were the last of his productions that he sent to the press. It was during this visit to England that he presented to Elizabeth, and probably wrote, his prose treatise entitled A View of the State of Ireland, written dialogue-wise between Eudoxus and Irenaeus; but that work remained unprinted, till it was published at Dublin by Sir James Ware in 1633.

Spenser returned to Ireland probably early in 1597; and was the next year recommended by the Queen to be sheriff of Cork; but, soon after the breaking out of Tyrone's rebellion in October, 1598, his house of Kilcolman was attacked and burned by the rebels, and, one child having perished in the flames, it was with difficulty that he made his escape with his wife and two sons. He arrived in England in a state of destitution; but it seems unlikely that, with his talents and great reputation, his powerful friends, his pension, and the rights he still retained, although deprived of the enjoyment of his Irish property for the moment, he could have been left to perish, as has been commonly said, of want: the breaking up of his constitution was a natural consequence of the sufferings he had lately gone through. All that we know, however, is that, after having been ill for some time, he died at an inn in King Street, Westminster, on the 16th of January, 1599. Two Cantos, undoubtedly genuine, of a subsequent Book of the Fairy Queen, and two stanzas of a third Canto, entitled Of Mutability, and forming part of the Legend of Constancy, were published in an

edition of his collected works, in a folio volume, in 1609; and it may be doubted if much more of the poem was ever written.

The most remarkable of Spenser's poems written before his great work, The Fairy Queen, are his Shepherd's Calendar and his Mother Hubberd's Tale. Both of these pieces are full of the spirit of poetry, and his genius displays itself in each in a variety of styles.

The Shepherd's Calendar, though constisting of twelve distinct poems denominated Æclogues, is less of a pastoral, in the ordinary acceptation, than it is of a piece of polemical or party divinity. Spenser's shepherds are, for the most part, pastors of the church, or clergymen, with only pious parishioners for sheep. One is a good shepherd, such as Algrind, that is, the puritanical archbishop of Canterbury, Grindall. Another, represented in a much less favourable light, is Morell, that is, his famous antagonist, Elmore, or Aylmer, bishop of London. The puritanical spirit of some parts of the Shepherd's Calendar, probably contributed to the popularity which the poem long retained. It was reprinted four times during the author's lifetime, in 1581, 1586, 1591, and 1597. Yet it is not only a very unequal composition, but is, in its best executed or most striking parts, far below the height to which Spenser afterwards learned to rise. This earliest work of Spenser's, however, betrays his study of our elder poetry as much by its diction as by other indications: he has thickly sprinkled it with words and phrases which had generally ceased to be used at the time when it was written. This he seems to have done, not so much that the antiquated style might give the dialogue an air of rusticity proper to the speech of shepherds, but rather in the same spirit and design (though he has carried the practice much farther) in which Virgil has done the same thing in his heroic poetry, that his verse might thereby be the more distinguished from common discourse, that it might fall upon the ears of men with something of the impressiveness and authority of a voice from other times, and that it might

seem to echo, and, as it were, continue and prolong, the strain of the old national minstrelsy; thus at once expressing his love and admiration of the preceding poets who had been his examples, and, in part, his instructors and inspirers, and making their compositions reflect additional light and beauty upon his own. This is almost the only advantage which the later poets in any language have over the earlier; and Spenser has availed himself of it more or less in most of his writings, though not in any later work to the same extent as in this first publication.

Executed in a firmer and more matured style, and, though with more regularity of manner, yet also with more true boldness and freedom, is the admirable Prosopopoia, as it is designated, of the adventures of the Fox and the Ape, or Mother Hubberd's Tale, notwithstanding that this, too, is stated to have been an early production—"long sithens composed," says the author in his dedication of it to the Lady Compton and Monteagle, "in the raw conceit of my youth." Perhaps, however, this was partly said to avert the offence that might be taken at the audacity of the satire. It has not much the appearance, either in manner or in matter, of the production of a very young writer. We should say that Mother Hubberd's Tale represents the middle age of Spenser's genius, if not of his life—the stage in his mental and poetical progress when his relish and power of the energetic had attained perfection, but the higher sense of the beautiful had not yet been fully developed. Such appears to be the natural progress of every mind that is capable of the highest things in both these directions: the feeling of force is first awakened, or at least is first matured; the feeling of beauty is of later growth. With even poetical minds of a subordinate class, indeed, it may sometimes happen that a perception of the beautiful, and a faculty of embodying it in words, acquire a considerable development without the love and capacity of the energetic having ever shown themselves in any unusual degree: such may be said to have been the case with Petrarch, to quote a remarkable example.

But the greatest poets have all been complete men, with the sense of beauty, indeed, strong and exquisite, and crowning all their other endowments, which is what makes them the greatest; but also with all other passions and powers correspondingly vigorous and active. Homer, Dante, Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Goethe, were all of them manifestly capable of achieving any degree of success in any other field as well as in poetry. They were not only poetically, but in all other respects, the most gifted intelligences of their times; men of the largest sense, of the most penetrating insight, of the most general research and information; nay, even in the most worldly arts and dexterities, able to cope with the ablest, whenever they chose to throw themselves into that game. They may not any of them have attained the highest degree of what is called worldly success; some of them may have even been crushed by the force of circumstances or evil days; Milton may have died in obscurity, Dante in exile; "the vision and the faculty divine" may have been all the light that cheered, all the estate that sustained, the old age of Homer; but no one can suppose that in any of these cases it was want of the requisite skill or talent that denied a different fortune. As for Spenser, we shall certainly much mistake his character if we suppose, from the romantic and unworldly strain of much—and that, doubtless, the best and highest—of his poetry, that he was anything resembling a mere dreamer. In the first place, the vast extent of his knowledge, comprehending all the learning of his age, and his voluminous writings, sufficiently prove that his days were not spent in idleness. Then, even in the matter of securing a livelihood and a position in the world, want of activity or eagerness is a fault of which he can hardly be accused. Bred, for whatever reason, to no profession, it may be doubted if he had any other course to take, in that age, upon the whole so little objectionable as the one he adopted. The scheme of life with which he set out seems to have been to endeavour, first of all, to secure for himself, by any honourable means,

the leisure necessary to enable him to cultivate and employ his poetical powers. With this view he addressed himself to Sidney, the chief professed patron of letters in that day (when, as yet, letters really depended to a great extent for encouragement and support upon the patronage of the great), hoping through, his interest, to obtain such a provision as he required from the bounty of the crown. In thus seeking to be supported at the public expense, and to withdraw a small portion of a fund, pretty sure to be otherwise wasted upon worse objects, for the modest maintenance of one poet, can we say that Spenser, being what he was, was much, or at all, to blame? Would it have been wiser, or more highminded, or in any sense better, for him to have thrown himself, like Greene and Nash, and the rest of that crew, upon the town, and, like them, wasted his fine genius in pamphleteering and blackguardism? He knew that he would not eat that public bread without returning to his country what she gave him a hundred and a thousand fold; he who must have felt and known well that no man had yet uttered himself in the English tongue so endowed for conferring upon the land, the language, and the people what all future generations would prize as their best inheritance, and what would contribute more than laws or victories, or any other glory, to maintain the name of England in honour and renown so long as it should be heard of among men.

But he did not immediately succeed in his object. It is probably true, as has been commonly stated, that Burghley looked with but small regard upon the poet and his claims. However, he at last contrived to overcome this obstacle; and eventually, as we have seen, he obtained from the crown both lands, offices, and a considerable pension. It is not at all likely that, circumstanced as he was at the commencement of his career, Spenser could in any other way have attained so soon to the same comparative affluence that he thus acquired. Probably the only respect in which he felt much dissatisfied or disappointed was in being obliged to

take up his residence in Ireland, without which, it may have been, he would have derived little or no benefit from his grant of land. Mother Hubberd's Tale must be supposed to have been written before he obtained that grant. It is a sharp and shrewd satir e upon the common modes of rising in the church and state; not at all passionate or declamatory, —on the contrary, pervaded by a spirit of quiet humour, which only occasionally gives place to a tone of greater elevation and solemnity, but assuredly, with all its high-minded and even severe morality, evincing in the author anything rather than either ignorance of the world or indifference to the ordinary objects of human ambition. No one will rise from its perusal with the notion that Spenser was a mere rhyming visionary, or singing somnambulist. No; like every other greatest poet, he was an eminently wise man, exercised in every field of thought, and rich in all knowledge—above all, in knowledge of mankind, the proper study of man. In this poem of Mother Hubberd's Tale we still find also both his puritanism and his imitation of Chaucer, two things which disappear altogether from his later poetry. Indeed, he has written nothing else so much in Chaucer's manner and spirit; nor have we nearly so true a reflection, or rather revival, of the Chaucerian narrative style—at once easy and natural, clear and direct, firm and economical, various and always spirited—in any other modern verse.

The Fairy Queen was designed by its author to be taken as an allegory—"a continued allegory, or dark conceit," as he calls it in his preliminary Letter to Raleigh "expounding his whole intention in the course of this work." The allegory was even artificial and involved to an unusual degree; for not only was the Fairy Queen, by whom the knights are sent forth upon their adventures, to be understood as meaning Glory in the general intention, but in a more particular sense she was to stand for "the most excellent and glorious person" of Queen Elizabeth; and some other eminent individual of the day appears in like manner to have been

shadowed forth in each of the other figures. The most interesting allegory that was ever written carries us along chiefly by making us forget that it is an allegory at all. The charm of Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress is that all the persons and all the places in it seem real—that Christian, and Evangelist, and Mr. Worldly Wiseman, and Mr. Greatheart, and the Giant Despair, and all the rest, are to our apprehension not shadows, but beings of flesh and blood; and the Slough of Despond, Vanity Fair, Doubting Castle, the Valley of Humiliation, and the Enchanted Ground, all so many actual scenes or localities which we have as we read before us or around us. For the moral lessons that are to be got out of the parable, it must no doubt be considered in another manner; but we speak of the delight it yields as a work of imagination. That is not increased, but impaired, or destroyed, by regarding it as an allegory—just as would be the humour of Don Quixote, or the marvels of the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, by either work being so regarded. In the same manner, whoever would enjoy the Fairy Queen as a poem must forget that it is an allegory, either single or double, either compound or simple. Nor in truth is it even much of a story. Neither the personages that move in it, nor the adventures they meet with, interest us much. For that matter, the most ordinary novel, or a police report in a newspaper, may often be much more entertaining. One fortunate consequence of all this is, that the poem scarcely loses anything by the design of the author never having been completed, or its completion at least not having come down to us. What we have of it is not injured in any material respect by the want of the rest. This Spenser himself no doubt felt when he originally gave it to the world in successive portions;—and it would not have mattered much although of the six Books he had published the three last before the three first.

These peculiarities—the absence of an interesting story or concatenation of incidents, and the want of human character and passion in the personages that carry on the

story, such as it is—are no defects in the Fairy Queen. On the contrary, the poetry is only left thereby so much the purer. Without calling Spenser the greatest of all poets, we may still say that his poetry is the most poetical of all poetry. Other poets are all of them something else as well as poets, and deal in reflection, or reasoning, or humour, or wit, almost as largely as in the proper product of the imaginative faculty; his strains alone, in the Fairy Queen, are poetry, all poetry, and nothing but poetry. It is vision unrolled after vision, to the sound of endlessly varying music. The "*shaping* spirit of imagination," considered apart from moral sensibility—from intensity of passion on the one hand, and grandeur of conception on the other—certainly never was possessed in the like degree by any other writer; nor has any other evinced a deeper feeling of all forms of the beautiful; nor have words ever been made by any other to embody thought with more wonderful art. On the one hand invention and fancy in the creation or conception of his thoughts; on the other the most exquisite sense of beauty, united with a command over all the resources of language, in their vivid and musical expression—these are the great distinguishing characteristics of Spenser's poetry. What of passion is in it lies mostly in the melody of the verse; but that is often thrilling and subduing in the highest degree. Its moral tone, also, is very captivating: a soul of nobleness, gentle and tender as the spirit of its own chivalry, modulates every cadence.

Spenser's extraordinary faculty of vision-seeing and picture-drawing can fail to strike none of his readers; but he will not be adequately appreciated or enjoyed by those who regard verse either as a non-essential or as a very subordinate element of poetry. Such minds, however, must miss half the charm of all poetry. Not only all that is purely sensuous in poetry must escape them, but likewise all the pleasurable excitement that lies in the harmonious accordance of the musical expression with the informing idea or feeling, and in the additional force or brilliancy that

in such inter-union is communicated by the one to the other. All beauty is dependent upon form: other things may often enter into the beautiful, but this is the one thing that can never be dispensed with; all other ingredients, as they must be contained by, so must be controlled by this; and the only thing that standing alone may constitute the beautiful is form or outline. Accordingly, whatever addresses itself to or is suited to gratify the imagination takes this character: it falls into more or less of regularity and measure. Mere passion is of all things the most unmeasured and irregular, naturally the most opposed of all things to form. But in that state it is also wholly unfitted for the purposes of art; before it can become imaginative in any artistic sense it must have put off its original merely volcanic character, and worn itself into something of measure and music. Thus all impassioned composition is essentially melodious, in a higher or lower degree; measured language is the appropriate and natural expression of passion or deep feeling operating artistically in writing or speech. The highest and most perfect kind of measured language is verse; and passion expressing itself in verse is what is properly called poetry. Take away the verse, and in most cases you t ke away half the poetry, sometimes much more. The verse, in truth, is only one of several things by the aid of which the passion seeks to give itself effective expression, or by which the thought is endowed with additional animation or beauty; nay, it is only one ingredient of the *musical* expression of the thought or passion. If the verse may be dispensed with, so likewise upon the same principle may every decoration of the sentiment or statement, everything else that would do more than convey the bare fact. Let the experiment be tried, and see how it will answer. Take a single instance. "Immediately through the obscurity a great number of flags were seen to be raised, all richly coloured:" out of these words, no doubt, the reader or hearer might, after some meditation, extract the conception of a very imposing scene. But, although they intimate with sufficient

exactness and distinctness the same literal fact, they are nevertheless the deadest prose compared with Milton's glorious words:—

> "All in a moment through the gloom were seen
> Ten thousand banners rise into the air,
> With orient colours waving."

And so it would happen in every other case in which true poetry was divested of its musical expression: a part, and it might be the greater part, of its life, beauty, and effect, would always be lost; and it would, in truth, cease to be what is distinctively called poetry or song, of which verse is as much one of the necessary constituents as passion or imagination itself. Those who dispute this will never be able to prove more than that their own enjoyment of the sensuous part of poetry, which is really that in which its peculiar character resides, is limited or feeble; which it may very well be in minds otherwise highly gifted, and even endowed with considerable imaginative power. The feeling of the merely beautiful, however, or of beauty unimpregnated by something of a moral spirit or meaning, is not likely in such minds to be very deep or strong. High art, therefore, is not their proper region, in any of its departments. In poetry they will probably not very greatly admire or enjoy either Spenser or Milton—and perhaps would prefer Paradise Lost in the prose version which Osborne the bookseller in the last century got a gentleman of Oxford to execute for the use of readers to whom the sense was rather obscured by the verse.

Passing over several of the great passages towards the commencement of the poem—such as the description of Queen Lucifera and her Six Counsellors in the Fourth Canto of the First Book, that of the visit of the Witch Duessa to Hell in the Fifth, and that of the Cave of Despair in the Ninth—which are probably more familiarly known to the generality of readers, we will take as a specimen of the Fairy Queen the escape of the Enchanter Archimage from

Bragadoccio and his man Trompart, and the introduction and description of Belphoebe, in the Third Canto of Book Second:—

He stayed not for more bidding, but away
Was sudden vanished out of his sight;
The northern wind his wings did broad display
At his command, and reared him up light,
From off the earth to take his airy flight.
They looked about, but nowhere could espy
Tract of his foot; then dead through great affright
They both nigh were, and each bade other fly;
Both fled at once, ne ever back returned eye;

Till that they come unto a forest green,
In which they shrowd themselves from causeless fear;
Yet fear them follows still, whereso they been;
Each trembling leaf and whistling wind they hear
As ghastly bug[1] does greatly them afear;
Yet both do strive their fearfulness to feign.[2]
At last they heard a horn, that shrilled clear
Throughout the wood, that echoed again,
And made the forest ring, as it would rive in twain.

Eft[3] through the thick they heard one rudely rush,
With noise whereof he from his lofty steed
Down fell to ground, and crept into a bush,
To hide his coward head from dying dreed;
But Trompart stoutly stayed, to taken heed
Of what might hap. Eftsoon there stepped foorth
A goodly lady clad in hunter's weed,
That seemed to be a woman of great worth,
And by her stately portance[4] born of heavenly birth.

Her face so fair as flesh it seemed not,
But heavenly pourtrait of bright angels' hue,
Clear as the sky, withouten blame or blot,
Through goodly mixture of complexions due;
And in her cheeks the vermeil red did shew
Like roses in a bed of lillies shed,
The which ambrosial odours from them threw,
And gazers' sense with double pleasure fed,
Able to heal the sick, and to revive the dead.

In her fair eyes two living lamps did flame,
Kindled above at the heavenly Maker's light,
And darted fiery beams out of the same,
So passing persant and so wondrous bright

[1] Bugbear. [2] Conceal. [3] Soon. [4] Carriage.

That quite bereaved the rash beholder's sight:
In them the blinded god his lustful fire
To kindle oft assayed, but had no might;
For with dread majesty and awful ire
She broke his wanton darts, and quenched base desire.

Her ivory forehead, full of bounty brave,
Like a broad table did itself dispread
For Love his lofty triumphs to engrave,
And write the battles of his great godhead:
All good and honour might therein be read,
For there their dwelling was; and, when she spake,
Sweet words like dropping honey she did shed,
And twixt the pearls and rubins[1] softly brake
A silver sound, that heavenly music seemed to make.

Upon her eyelids many graces sate,
Under the shadow of her even brows,
Working belgardes[2] and amorous retrate;[3]
And every one her with a grace endows,
And every one with meekness to her bows:
So glorious mirror of celestial grace,
And sovereign moniment of mortal vows,
How shall frail pen descrive[4] her heavenly face,
For fear through want of skill her beauty to disgrace?

So fair, and thousand thousand times more fair,
She seemed, when she presented was to sight;
And was yclad, for heat of scorching air,
All in a silken camus[5] lilly white,
Purfled[6] upon with many a folded plight,[7]
Which all above besprinkled was throughout
With golden aiglets, that glistened bright,
Like twinkled stars; and all the skirt about
Was hemmed with golden fringe.

Below her ham her weed[8] did somewhat train;[9]
And her straight legs most bravely were embaled[10]
In gilden[11] buskins of costly cordwain,[12]
All barred with golden bends, which were entailed[13]
With curious anticks,[14] and full fair aumailed;[15]
Before they fastened were under her knee
In a rich jewel, and therein entrailed[16]
The ends of all the knots, that none might see
How they within their foldings close enwrapped be.

Like two fair marble pillars they were seen,
Which do the temple of the gods support,
Whom all the people deck with girlonds[17] green,
And honour in their festival resort;

1 Rubies. 2 Beautiful looks. 3 Aspect. 4 Describe.
5 Thin gown. 6 Gathered. 7 Plait. 8 Dress.
9 Hung. 10 Enclosed. 11 Gilded. 12 Spanish leather.
13 Engraved, marked. 14 Figures. 15 Enamelled.
16 Interwoven. 17 Garlands.

Those same with stately grace and princely port
She taught to tread, when she herself would grace;
But with the woody nymphs when she did sport,
Or when the flying libbard[1] she did chase,
She could them nimbly move, and after fly apace.

And in her hand a sharp boar-spear she held,
And at her back a bow and quiver gay
Stuffed with steel-headed darts, wherewith she quelled
The salvage beasts in her victorious play,
Knit with a golden baldric, which forelay
Athwart her snowy breast, and did divide
Her dainty paps; which, like young fruit in May,
Now little, gan to swell, and, being tied,
Through her thin weed their places only signified.

Her yellow locks, crisped like golden wire,
About her shoulders weren loosely shed,
And, when the wind amongst them did inspire,
They waved like a penon wide dispread,
And low behind her back were scattered;
And, whether art it were or heedless hap,
As through the flowering forest rash she fled,
In her rude hairs sweet flowers themselves did lap,
And flourishing fresh leaves and blossoms did enwrap.

Such as Diana, by the sandy shore
Of swift Eurotas, or on Cynthus green,
Where all the nymphs have her unwares forlore,[2]
Wandereth alone, with bow and arrows keen,
To seek her game; or as that famous queen
Of Amazons, whom Pyrrhus did destroy,
The day that first of Priam she was seen
Did show herself in great triumphant joy,
To succour the weak state of sad afflicted Troy.

Other Elizabethan Poetry.

In the six or seven years from 1590 to 1596, what a world of wealth had thus been added to our poetry by Spenser alone! what a different thing from what it was before had the English language been made by his writings to natives, to foreigners, to all posterity! But England was now a land of song, and the busiest and most productive age of our

[1] Leopard. [2] Forsaken.

poetical literature had fairly commenced. What are commonly called the minor poets of the Elizabethan age are to be counted by hundreds, and few of them are altogether without merit. If they have nothing else, the least gifted of them have at least something of the freshness and airiness of that balmy morn, some tones caught from their greater contemporaries, some echoes of the spirit of music that then filled the universal air. For the most part the minor Elizabethan poetry is remarkable for ingenuity and elaboration, often carried to the length of quaintness, both in the thought and the expression; but, if there be more in it of art than of nature, the art is still that of a high school, and always consists in something more than the mere disguising of prose in the dress of poetry. If it is sometimes unnatural, it is at least very seldom simply insipid, like much of the well-sounding verse of more recent eras. The writers are always in earnest, whether with their nature or their art; they never write from no impulse, and with no object except that of stringing commonplaces into rhyme or rhythm; even when it is most absurd, what they produce is still fanciful, or at the least fantastical. The breath of some sort of life or other is almost always in it. The poorest of it is distinguished from prose by something more than the mere sound.

Warner.

The three authors of the poems of most pretension, with the exception of the Fairy Queen, that appeared during the period now under review, are Warner, Drayton, and Daniel. William Warner is supposed to have been born about the year 1558; he died in 1609. He has told us himself (in his Eleventh Book, chapter 62), that his birthplace was London, and that his father was one of those who sailed with Chancellor to Muscovy, in 1555: this, he says, was before

he himself was born. Warner's own profession was the not particularly poetical one of an attorney of the Common Pleas. According to Anthony Wood, who makes him to have been a Warwickshire man, he had before 1586 written several pieces of verse, "whereby his name was cried up among the minor poets;" but this is probably a mistake; none of this early poetry imputed to Warner is now known to exist; and in the Preface to his Albion's England, he seems to intimate that that was his first performance in verse. In the Dedication to his poem he explains the meaning of the title, which is not very obvious: "This our whole island," he observes, "anciently called Britain, but more anciently Albion, presently containing two kingdoms, England and Scotland, is cause (right honourable) that, to distinguish the former, whose only occurrents [occurrences] I abridge from our history, I entitle this my book Albion's England." Albion's England first appeared, in thirteen Books, in 1586: and was reprinted in 1589, in 1592, in 1596, in 1597, and in 1602. In 1606 the author added a Continuance, or continuation, in three Books: and the whole work was republished (without, however, the last three Books having been actually reprinted) in 1612. In this last edition it is described on the title-page as "now revised, and newly enlarged [by the author] a little before his death." It thus appears that, so long as its popularity lasted, Albion's England was one of the most popular long poems ever written. But that was only for about twenty years: although the early portion of it had in less than that time gone through half a dozen editions, the Continuation, published in 1606, sold so indifferently that enough of the impression still remained to complete the book when the whole was republished in 1612, and after that no other edition was ever called for, till the poem was reprinted in Chalmers's collection in 1810. The entire neglect into which it so soon fell, from the height of celebrity and popular favour, was probably brought about by various causes. Warner, according to Anthony Wood, was ranked

by his contemporaries on a level with Spenser, and they were called the Homer and Virgil of their age. If he and Spenser were ever equally admired, it must have been by very different classes of readers. Albion's England is undoubtedly a work of very remarkable talent of its kind. It is in form a history of England, or Southern Britain, from the Deluge to the reign of James I., but may fairly be said to be, as the title-page of the last edition describes it, "not barren in variety of inventive intermixtures." Or, to use the author's own words in his Preface, he certainly, as he hopes, has no great occasion to fear that he has grossly failed "in verity, brevity, invention, and variety, profitable, pathetical, pithy, and pleasant." In fact, it is one of the liveliest and most amusing poems ever written. Every striking event or legend that the old chronicles afford is seized hold of, and related always clearly, often with very considerable spirit and animation. But it is far from being a mere compilation; several of the narratives are not to be found anywhere else, and a large proportion of the matter is Warner's own, in every sense of the word. In this, as well as in other respects, it has greatly the advantage over the Mirror for Magistrates, as a rival to which work it was perhaps originally produced, and with the popularity of which it could scarcely fail considerably to interfere. Though a long poem (not much under 10,000 verses), it is still a much less ponderous work than the Mirror, absolutely as well as specifically. Its variety, though not obtained by any very artificial method, is infinite: not only are the stories it selects, unlike those in the Mirror, generally of a merry cast, and much more briefly and smartly told, but the reader is never kept long even on the same track or ground: all subjects, all departments of human knowledge or speculation, from theology down to common arithmetic, are intermixed, or rather interlaced, with the histories and legends in the most extraordinary manner. The verse is the favourite fourteen-syllable line of that age, the same in reality with that which has in modern times been commonly

divided into two lines, the first of eight, the second of six syllables, and which in that form is still most generally used for short compositions in verse, more especially for those of a narrative or otherwise popular character. What Warner was chiefly admired for in his own day was his style. Meres in his Wit's Treasury mentions him as one of those by whom the English tongue in that age had been "mightily enriched, and gorgeously invested in rare ornaments and resplendent habiliments." And for fluency, combined with precision and economy of diction, Warner is probably unrivalled among the writers of English verse We do not know whether his professional studies and habits may have contributed to give this character to his style; but, if the poetry of attorneys be apt to take this curt, direct, lucid, and at the same time flowing shape, it is a pity that we had not a little more of it. His command of the vulgar tongue, in particular, is wonderful. This indeed is perhaps his most remarkable poetical characteristic; and the tone which was thus given to his poem (being no doubt that of his own mind) may be conjectured to have been in great part the source both of its immense popularity for a time, and of the neglect and oblivion into which it was afterwards allowed to drop. Nevertheless, the poem, as we have said, has very remarkable merit in some respects, and many passages, or rather portions of passages, in it may still be read with pleasure. It is also in the highest degree curious both as a repository of our old language, and for many notices of the manners and customs of our ancestors which are scattered up and down in it. All that is commonly known of Warner is from the story of Argentile and Curan, which has been reprinted from his Fourth Book by Mrs. Cooper in The Muses' Library (1738), and by Percy in his Reliques, and that of The Patient Countess, which Percy has also given from his Eighth Book.

The following passage from the Third Book, being the conclusion of the 17th Chapter, is a specimen of Warner's very neatest style of narration.—He has related Cæsar's

victory over the Britons, which he says was won with difficulty, the conquest of the country having been only accomplished through the submission of that "traitorous knight, the Earl of London," whose disloyal example in yielding his charge and city to the foe was followed by the other cities; and then he winds up thus:—

But he, that won in every war, at Rome in civil robe
Was stabbed to death: no certainty is underneath this globe;
The good are envied of the bad, and glory finds disdain,
And people are in constancy as April is in rain;
Whereof, amidst our serious pen, this fable entertain:—
An Ass, an Old Man, and a Boy did through the city pass;
And, whilst the wanton Boy did ride, the[1] Old Man led the Ass.
See yonder doting fool, said folk, that crawleth scarce for age,
Doth set the boy upon his ass, and makes himself his page.
Anon the blamed Boy alights, and lets the Old Man ride,
And, as the Old Man did before, the Boy the Ass did guide.
But, passing so, the people then did much the Old Man blame,
And told him, Churl, thy limbs be tough; let ride the boy, for shame.
The fault thus found, both Man and Boy did back the ass and ride;
Then that the ass was over-charged each man that met them cried.
Now both alight and go on foot, and lead the empty beast;
But then the people laugh, and say that one might ride at least.
The Old Man, seeing by no ways he could the people please,
Not blameless then, did drive the ass and drown him in the seas.
Thus, whilst we be, it will not be that any pleaseth all;
Else had been wanting, worthily, the noble Cæsar's fall.

The end of Richard the Third, in the Sixth Book (Chapter 26th), is given with much spirit:—

Now Richard heard that Richmond was assisted, and on shore,
And like unkenneled Cerberus the crooked tyrant swore,
And all complexions act at once confusedly in him;
He studieth, striketh, threats, entreats, and looketh mildly grim;
Mistrustfully he trusteth, and he dreadingly doth[2] dare,
And forty passions in a trice in him consort and square.
But when, by his convented force, his foes increased more,
He hastened battle, finding his corrival apt therefore.
When Richmond orderly in all had battailed his aid,
Enringed by his complices, their cheerful leader said:—
Now is the time and place, sweet friends, and we the persons be
That must give England breath, or else unbreathe for her must we.

[1] In the printed copy "a." The edition before us, that of 1612, abounds with typographical errata.

[2] There can be no question that this is the true word, which is misprinted "did" in the edition before us.

No tyranny is fabled, and no tyrant was indeed,
Worse than our foe, whose works will act my words if well he speed.
For ills[1] to ills superlative are easily enticed,
But entertain amendment as the Gergesites did Christ.
Be valiant then; he biddeth so that would not be outbid
For courage, yet shall honour him, though base, that better did.
I am right heir Lancastrian, he in York's destroyed right
Usurpeth but, though either's ours,[2] for neither claim I fight,
But for our country's long-lacked weal, for England's peace, I war;
Wherein He speed us, unto whom I all events refar.
Meanwhile had furious Richard set his armies in array,
And then, with looks even like himself, this or the like did say:—
Why, lads? shall yonder Welshman, with his stragglers, overmatch?
Disdain ye not such rivals, and defer ye their dispatch?
Shall Tudor from Plantagenet the crown by craking snatch?
Know Richard's very thoughts (he touched the diadem he wore)
Be metal of this metal: then believe I love it more
Than that for other law than life to supersede my claim;
And lesser must not be his plea that counterpleads the same.
The weapons overtook his words, and blows they bravely change,
When like a lion, thirsting blood, did moody Richard range,
And made large slaughters where he went, till Richmond he espied,
Whom singling, after doubtful swords, the valorous tyrant died.

There are occasionally touches of true pathos in Warner, and one great merit which he has is, that his love of brevity generally prevents him from spoiling any stroke of this kind by multiplying words and images with the view of heightening the effect, as many of his contemporaries are prone to do. His picture of Fair Rosamond in the hands of Queen Eleanor is very touching:—

Fair Rosamund, surprised thus ere thus she did expect,
Fell on her humble knees, and did her fearful hands erect:
She blushed out beauty, whilst the tears did wash her pleasing face,
And begged pardon, meriting no less of common grace.
So far, forsooth, as in me lay, I did, quoth she, withstand;
But what may not so great a king by means or force command?
And dar'st thou, minion, quoth the Queen, thus article to me?
. . . . . .
With that she dashed her on the lips, so dyed double red:
Hard was the heart that gave the blow; soft were those lips that bled.
Then forced she her to swallow down, prepared for that intent,
A poisoned potion . . . .

[1] Misprinted "ill."

[2] We owe to an ingenious friend this happy emendation of the "through eithers ours" of the old copies.

Daniel.

The great work of Samuel Daniel, who was born at Taunton, in Somersetshire, in 1562, and died in 1619, is his Civil Wars between the Two Houses of Lancaster and York, in eight Books, the first four published in 1595, the fifth in 1599, the sixth in 1602, the two last in 1609; the preceding Books being always, we believe, republished along with the new edition. He is also the author of various minor poetical productions, of which the principal are a collection of fifty-seven Sonnets entitled Delia, his Musophilus, containing a General Defence of Learning, some short epistles, and several tragedies and court masques. And he wrote, besides, in prose, a History of England, from the Conquest to the end of the reign of Edward III., as well as a Defence of Rhyme. Very opposite judgments have been passed upon Daniel. Ben Jonson, in his conversations with Drummond, declared him to be no poet: Drummond, on the contrary, pronounces him "for sweetness of rhyming second to none." His style, both in prose and verse, has a remarkably modern air: if it were weeded of a few obsolete expressions, it would scarcely seem more antique than that of Waller, which is the most modern of the seventeenth century. Bishop Kennet, who has republished Daniel's History, after telling us that the author had a place at Court in the reign of King James I., being groom of the privy chambers to the Queen, observes, that he "seems to have taken all the refinement a court could give him;" and probably the absence of pedantry in his style, and its easy and natural flow, are to be traced in great part to the circumstance of his having been a man of the world. His verse, too, always careful and exact, is in many passages more than smooth; even in his dramatic writings (which, having nothing dramatic about them except the form, have

been held in very small estimation) it is frequently musical and sweet, though always artificial. The highest quality of his poetry is a tone of quiet, pensive reflection in which he is fond of indulging, and which often rises to dignity and eloquence, and has at times even something of depth and originality. Daniel's was the not uncommon fate of an attendant upon courts and the great: he is believed to have experienced some neglect from his royal patrons in his latter days, or at least to have been made jealous by Ben Jonson being employed to furnish part of the poetry for the court entertainments, the supply of which he used to have all to himself; upon which he retired to a life of quiet and contemplation in the country. It sounds strange in the present day to be told that his favourite retreat from the gaiety and bustle of London was a house which he rented in Old Street, St. Luke's. In his gardens here, we are informed by the writer of the Life prefixed to his collected poems, he would often indulge in entire solitude for many months, or at most receive the visits of only a few select friends. It is said to have been here that he composed most of his dramatic pieces. Towards the end of his life he retired to a farm which he had at Beckington, near Philip's Norton, in Somersetshire, and his death took place there. "He was married," says the editor of his works, "but whether to the person he so often celebrates under the name of Delia, is uncertain." Fuller, in his Worthies, tells us that his wife's name was Justina. They had no children. Daniel is said to have been appointed to the honorary post of Poet Laureate after the death of Spenser.

In his narrative poetry, Daniel is in general wire-drawn, flat, and feeble. He has no passion, and very little descriptive power. His Civil Wars has certainly as little of martial animation in it as any poem in the language. There is abundance, indeed, of "the tranquil mind;" but of "the plumed troops," and the rest of "the pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war," Daniel seems, in composing this work (we had nearly written in this composing work)

to have taken as complete a farewell as Othello himself. It is mostly a tissue of long-winded disquisition and cold and languid declamation, and has altogether more of the qualities of a good opiate than of a good poem. We will therefore take the few extracts for which we can make room from some of his other productions, where his vein of reflection is more in place, and also better in itself. His Musophilus is perhaps upon the whole his finest piece. The poem, which is in the form of a dialogue between Philocosmus (a lover of the world) and Musophilus (a lover of the Muse), commences thus:—

Philocosmus.

Fond man, Musophilus, that thus dost spend
In an ungainful art thy dearest days,
Tiring thy wits, and toiling to no end
But to attain that idle smoke of praise!
Now, when this busy world cannot attend
The untimely music of neglected lays,
Other delights than these, other desires,
This wiser profit-seeking age requires.

Musophilus.

Friend Philocosmus, I confess indeed
I love this sacred art thou set'st so light:
And, though it never stand my life in stead,
It is enough it gives myself delight,
The whilst my unafflicted mind doth feed
On no unholy thoughts for benefit.

Be it that my unseasonable song
Come out of time, that fault is in the time;
And I must not do virtue so much wrong
As love her aught the worse for others' crime;
And yet I find some blessed spirits among
That cherish me, and like and grace my rhyme.

A gain that[1] I do more in soul esteem
Than all the gain of dust the world doth crave;
And, if I may attain but to redeem
My name from dissolution and the grave,
I shall have done enough; and better deem
To have lived to *be* than to have died to *have*.

[1] Erroneously printed in the edition before us (2 vols. 12mo. 1718) "Again that."

Short-breathed mortality would yet extend
That span of life so far forth as it may,
And rob her fate; seek to beguile her end
Of some few lingering days of after-stay;
That all this Little All might not descend
Into the dark an universal prey;
And give our labours yet this poor delight
That, when our days do end, they are not done
And, though we die, we shall not perish quite,
But live two lives where others have but one.

Afterwards Musophilus replies very finely to an objection of Philocosmus to the cultivation of poetry, from the small number of those who really cared for it:—

And for the few that only lend their ear,
That few is all the world; which with a few
Do ever live, and move, and work, and stir.
This is the heart doth feel, and only know;
The rest, of all that only bodies bear,
Roll up and down, and fill up but the row;

And serve as others' members, not their own,
The instruments of those that do direct.
Then, what disgrace is this, not to be known
To those know not to give themselves respect?
And, though they swell, with pomp of folly blown,
They live ungraced, and die but in neglect.

And, for my part, if only one allow
The care my labouring spirits take in this,
He is to me a theatre large enow,
And his applause only sufficient is;
All my respect is bent but to his brow;
That is my all, and all I am is his.

And, if some worthy spirits be pleased too,
It shall more comfort breed, but not more will.
But what if none? It cannot yet undo
The love I bear unto this holy skill:
This is the thing that I was born to do;
This is my scene; this part must I fulfil.

It is in another poem, his Epistle to the Lady Margaret Countess of Cumberland (mother of Lady Anne Clifford, afterwards Countess of Pembroke, Dorset, and Montgomery, to whom Daniel had been tutor), that we have the stanza ending with the striking exclamation—

—— Unless above himself he can
Erect himself, how poor a thing is man!

Drayton.

Michael Drayton, who is computed to have been born in 1563, and who died in 1631, is one of the most voluminous of our old poets; being the author, besides many minor compositions, of three works of great length:—his Barons' Wars (on the subject of the civil wars of the reign of Edward II.), originally entitled Mortimeriados, under which name it was published in 1596; his England's Heroical Epistles, 1598; and his Polyolbion, the first eighteen Books of which appeared in 1612, and the whole, consisting of thirty Books, and extending to as many thousand lines, in 1622. This last is the work on which his fame principally rests. It is a most elaborate and minute topographical description of England, written in Alexandrine rhymes; and is a very remarkable work for the varied learning it displays, as well as for its poetic merits. The genius of Drayton is neither very imaginative nor very pathetic; but he is an agreeable and weighty writer, with an ardent, if not a highly creative, fancy. From the height to which he occasionally ascends, as well as from his power of keeping longer on the wing,' he must be ranked, as he always has been, much before both Warner and Daniel. He has greatly more elevation than the former, and more true poetic life than the latter. The following is from the commencement of the Thirteenth Book, or Song, of the Polyolbion, the subject of which is the County of Warwick, of which Drayton, as he here tells us, was a native:—

> Upon the mid-lands now the industrious muse doth fall;
> That shire which we the heart of England well may call,
> As she herself extends (the midst which is decreed)
> Betwixt St. Michael's Mount and Berwick bordering Tweed,
> Brave Warwick, that abroad so long advanced her Bear,
> By her illustrious Earls renowned every where;
> Above her neighbouring shires which always bore her head.

My native country, then, which so brave spirits hast bred,
If there be virtues yet remaining in thy earth,
Or any good of thine thou bred'st into my birth,
Accept it as thine own, whilst now I sing of thee,
Of all thy later brood the unworthiest though I be.

. . . . . .

When Phœbus lifts his head out of the water's[1] wave,
No sooner doth the earth her flowery bosom brave,
At such time as the year brings on the pleasant spring
But Hunt's up to the morn the feathered sylvans sing:
And, in the lower grove as on the rising knowl,
Upon the highest spray of every mounting pole
These quiristers are perched, with many a speckled breast:
Then from her burnished gate the goodly glittering East
Gilds every mountain-top, which late the humorous night
Bespangled had with pearl, to please the morning's sight;
On which the mirthful quires, with their clear open throats,
Unto the joyful morn so strain their warbling notes
That hills and valleys ring, and even the echoing air
Seems all composed of sounds about them every where.
The throstle with shrill sharps, as purposely he song
To awake the lustless sun, or chiding that so long
He was in coming forth that should the thickets thrill;
The woosel near at hand; that hath a golden hill,
As nature him had marked of purpose t' let us see
That from all other birds his tunes should different be;
For with their vocal sounds they sing to pleasant May;
Upon his dulcet pipe the merle doth only play.
When in the lower brake the nightingale hard by
In such lamenting strains the joyful hours doth ply
As though the other birds she to her tunes would draw
And, but that Nature, by her all-constraining law,
Each bird to her own kind this season doth invite,
They else, alone to hear that charmer of the night
(The more to use their ears) their voices sure would spare,
That moduleth her notes so admirably rare
As man to set in parts at first had learned of her.
To Philomel the next the linnet we prefer;
And by that warbling the bird woodlark place we then,
The red-sparrow, the nope, the redbreast, and the wren;
The yellow-pate, which, though she hurt the blooming tree,
Yet scarce hath any bird a finer pipe than she.
And, of these chanting fowls, the goldfinch not behind,
That hath so many sorts descending from her kind.
The tydy, for her notes as delicate as they;
The laughing hecco; then, the counterfeiting jay.
The softer with the shrill, some hid among the leaves,
Some in the taller trees, some in the lower greaves,
Thus sing away the morn, until the mounting sun
Through thick exhaled fogs his golden head hath run,
And through the twisted tops of our close covert creeps
To kiss the gentle shade, this while that sweetly sleeps.

[1] Or, perhaps, "watery." The common text gives "winter's."

We will add a short specimen of Drayton's lighter style from his Nymphidia—the account of the equipage of the Queen of the Fairies, when she set out to visit her lover Pigwiggen. The reader may compare it with Mercutio's description in Romeo and Juliet:—

Her chariot ready straight is made;
Each thing therein is fitting laid,
That she by nothing might be stayed,
For nought must be her letting;
Four nimble guests the horses were,
Their harnesses of gossamer,
Fly Cranion, her charioteer,
Upon the coach-box getting.

Her chariot of a snail's fine shell
Which for the colours did excel,
The fair Queen Mab becoming well,
So lively was the limning;
The seat the soft wool of the bee,
The cover (gallantly to see)
The wing of a pied butterflee;
I trow 'twas simple trimming.

The wheels composed of cricket's bones,
And daintily made for the nonce;
For fear of rattling on the stones
With thistle down they shod it;
For all her maidens much did fear
If Oberon had chanced to hear
That Mab his queen should have been there,
He would not have abode it.

She mounts her chariot with a trice,
Nor would she stay for no advice
Until her maids, that were so nice,
To wait on her were fitted;
But ran herself away alone;
Which when they heard, there was not one
But hasted after to be gone,
As she had been diswitted.

Hop, and Mop, and Drab so clear,
Pip and Trip, and Skip, that were
To Mab their sovereign so dear,
Her special maids of honour;
Fib, and Tib, and Pink, and Pin,
Tick, and Quick, and Jill, and Jin,
Tit, and Nit, and Wap, and Win,
The train that wait upon her.

Upon a grasshopper they got,
And, what with amble and with trot,
For hedge nor ditch they spared not,
But after her they hie them:
A cobweb over them they throw,
To shield the wind if it should blow;
Themselves they wisely could bestow
Lest any should espy them.

Joseph Hall.

Joseph Hall was born in 1574, and was successively bishop of Exeter and Norwich, from the latter of which sees having been expelled by the Long Parliament, he died, after protracted sufferings from imprisonment and poverty, in 1656. Hail began his career of authorship by the publication of Three Books of Satires, in 1597, while he was a student at Cambridge, and only in his twenty-third year. A continuation followed the next year under the title of Virgidemiarum the Three last Books; and the whole were afterwards republished together, as Virgidemiarum Six Books; that is, six books of bundles of rods. "These satires," says Warton, who has given an elaborate analysis of them, "are marked with a classical precision to which English poetry had yet early attained. They are replete with animation of style and sentiment. . . . The characters are delineated in strong and lively colouring, and their discriminations are touched with the masterly traces of genuine humour. The versification is equally energetic and elegant, and the fabric of the couplets approaches to the modern standard."* Hall's satires have been repeatedly reprinted in modern times.

* Hist. of Eng. Poet. iv. 338.

Sylvester.

One of the most popular poets of this date was Joshua Sylvester, the translator of The Divine Weeks and Works, and other productions, of the French poet Du Bartas. Sylvester has the honour of being supposed to have been one of the early favourites of Milton. In one of his publications he styles himself a Merchant-Adventurer, and he seems to have belonged to the Puritan party, which may have had some share in influencing Milton's regard. His translation of Du Bartas was first published in 1605; and the seventh edition (beyond which, we believe, its popularity did not carry it) appeared in 1641. Nothing can be more uninspired than the general run of Joshua's verse, or more fantastic and absurd than the greater number of its more ambitious passages; for he had no taste or judgment, and provided the stream of sound and the jingle of the rhyme were kept up, all was right in his notion. His poetry consists chiefly of translations from the French; but he is also the author of some original pieces, the title of one of which, a courtly offering from the poetical Puritan to the prejudices of King James, may be quoted as a lively specimen of his style and genius:—"Tobacco battered, and the pipes shattered, about their ears that idly idolize so base and barbarous a weed, or at leastwise overlove so loathsome a vanity, by a volley of holy shot thundered from Mount Helicon."* But, with all his general flatness and frequent absurdity, Sylvester has an uncommon flow of harmonious words at times, and occasionally even some fine lines and felicitous expressions. His contemporaries called him the "Silver-tongued Sylvester," for what they considered the sweetness of his versification—and some of his best passages justify

* 8vo. Lond. 1615.

the title. Indeed, even when the substance of what he writes approaches nearest to nonsense, the sound is often very graceful, soothing the ear with something like the swing and ring of Dryden's heroics. The commencement of the following passage from his translation of Du Bartas may remind the reader of Milton's "Hail, holy light! offspring of heaven first-born":—

All hail, pure lamp, bright, sacred, and excelling;
Sorrow and care, darkness and dread repelling;
Thou world's great taper, wicked men's just terror,
Mother of truth, true beauty's only mirror,
God's eldest daughter; O! how thou art full
Of grace and goodness! O! how beautiful!
. . . . . .
But yet, because all pleasures wax unpleasant
If without pause we still possess them present,
And none can right discern the sweets of peace
That have not felt war's irksome bitterness,
And swans seem whiter if swart crows be by
(For contraries each other best descry),
The All's architect alternately decreed
That night the Day, the Day should Night succeed.
The Night, to temper Day's exceeding drought,
Moistens our air, and makes our earth to sprout:
The Night is she that all our travails eases,
Buries our cares, and all our griefs appeases:
The Night is she that, with her sable wing
In gloomy darkness hushing every thing,
Through all the world dumb silence doth distil,
And wearied bones with quiet sleep doth fill.
Sweet Night! without thee, without thee, alas!
Our life were loathsome, even a hell, to pass;
For outward pains and inward passions still,
With thousand deaths, would soul and body thrill.
O Night, thou pullest the proud masque away
Wherewith vain actors, in this world's great play,
By day disguise them. For no difference
Night makes between the peasant and the prince,
The poor and rich, the prisoner and the judge,
The foul and fair, the master and the drudge,
The fool and wise, Barbarian and the Greek;
For Night's black mantle covers all alike.

Chapman's Homer.

George Chapman was born at Hitching Hill, in the county of Hertford, in 1557, and lived till 1634. Besides his plays, which will be afterwards noticed, he is the author of several original poetical pieces; but he is the best and most favourably known by his versions of the Iliad and the Odyssey. "He would have made a great epic poet," Charles Lamb has said, in his Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets, turning to these works after having characterized his dramas, "if, indeed, he has not abundantly shown himself to be one: for his Homer is not so properly a translation as the stories of Achilles and Ulysses re-written. The earnestness and passion which he has put into every part of these poems would be incredible to a reader of mere modern translations. His almost Greek zeal for the honour of his heroes is only paralleled by that fierce spirit of Hebrew bigotry with which Milton, as if personating one of the zealots of the old law, clothed himself when he sat down to paint the acts of Samson against the uncircumcised. The great obstacle to Chapman's translations being read is their unconquerable quaintness. He pours out in the same breath the most just and natural, and the most violent and forced expressions. He seems to grasp whatever words come first to hand during the impetus of inspiration, as if all other must be inadequate to the divine meaning. But passion (the all in all in poetry) is everywhere present, raising the low, dignifying the mean, and putting sense into the absurd. He makes his readers glow, weep, tremble, take any affection which he pleases, be moved by words or in spite of them, be disgusted and overcome that disgust." Chapman's Homer is, in some respects, not unworthy of this enthusiastic tribute. Few writers have been more copiously inspired with the genuine frenzy of poetry. With more judgment and

more care he might have given to his native language, in his version of the Iliad, one of the very greatest of the poetical works it possesses. In spite, however, of a hurry and impetuosity which betray him into many mistranslations, and, on the whole, have the effect perhaps of giving a somewhat too tumultuous and stormy representation of the Homeric poetry, the English into which Chapman transfuses the meaning of the mighty ancient is often singularly and delicately beautiful. He is the author of nearly all the happiest of the compound epithets which Pope has adopted, and of many others equally musical and expressive. "Far-shooting Phœbus,"—"the ever-living-gods,"—"the many-headed hill,"—"the ivory-wristed queen,"—are a few of the felicitous combinations with which he has enriched his native tongue. Carelessly executed, indeed, as the work for the most part is, there is scarcely a page of it that is not irradiated by gleams of the truest poetic genius. Often in the midst of a long paragraph of the most chaotic versification, the fatigued and distressed ear is surprised by a few lines,—or it may be sometimes only a single line,—"musical as is Apollo's lute,"—and sweet and graceful enough to compensate for ten times as much ruggedness.

Harington; Fairfax; Fanshawe.

Of the translators of foreign poetry which belong to this period, three are very eminent. Sir John Harington's translation of the Orlando Furioso first appeared in 1591, when the author was in his thirtieth year. It does not convey all the glow and poetry of Ariosto; but it is, nevertheless, a performance of great ingenuity and talent. The translation of Tasso's great epic by Edward Fairfax was first published, under the title of Godfrey of Bulloigne, or the Recoverie of Jerusalem, in 1600. This is a work of true genius, full of passages of great beauty; and, although by no means a

perfectly exact or servile version of the Italian original, is throughout executed with as much care as taste and spirit.* Sir Richard Fanshawe is the author of versions of Camoens's Lusiad, of Guarini's Pastor Fido, of the Fourth Book of the Æneid, of the Odes of Horace, and of the Querer por Solo Querer (To love for love's sake) of the Spanish dramatist Mendoza. Some passages from the last-mentioned work, which was published in 1649, may be found in Lamb's Specimens,** the ease and flowing gaiety of which have never been excelled even in original writing. The Pastor Fido is also rendered with much spirit and excellence. Fanshawe is, besides, the author of a Latin translation of Fletcher's Faithful Shepherdess, and of some original poetry. His genius, however, was sprightly and elegant rather than lofty, and perhaps he does not succeed so well in translating poetry of a more serious style.

Drummond.

One of the most graceful poetical writers of the reign of James I. is William Drummond, of Hawthornden, near Edinburgh; and he is further deserving of notice as the first of his countrymen, at least of any eminence, who aspired to write in English. He has left us a quantity of prose as well as verse; the former very much resembling the style of Sir Philip Sidney in his Arcadia,—the latter, in manner and spirit, formed more upon the model of Surrey, or rather upon that of Petrarch and the other Italian poets whom Surrey and many of his English successors imitated, No early English imitator of the Italian poetry, however, has excelled Drummond, either in the sustained melody of his verse, or its rich vein of thoughtful tenderness.

* Reprinted in the Tenth and Fourteenth Volumes of Knight's Weekly Volume.

** Vol. II. pp. 242—253.

Davies.

A remarkable poem of this age, first published in 1599, is the Nosce Teipsum of Sir John Davies, who was successively solicitor- and attorney-general in the reign of James, and had been appointed to the place of Chief Justice of the King's Bench, when he died, before he could enter upon its duties, in 1626. Davies is also the author of a poem on dancing entitled Orchestra, and of some minor pieces, all distinguished by vivacity as well as precision of style; but he is only now remembered for his philosophical poem, the earliest of the kind in the language. It is written in rhyme, in the common heroic ten-syllable verse, but disposed in quatrains. No other writer has managed this difficult stanza so successfully as Davies: it has the disadvantage of requiring the sense to be in general closed at certain regularly and quickly recurring turns, which yet are very ill adapted for an effective pause; and even all the skill of Dryden has been unable to free it from a certain air of monotony and languor,—a circumstance of which that poet may be supposed to have been himself sensible, since he wholly abandoned it after one or two early attempts. Davies, however, has conquered its difficulties; and, as has been observed, "perhaps no language can produce a poem, extending to so great a length, of more condensation of thought, or in which fewer languid verses will be found."* In fact, it is by this condensation and sententious brevity, so carefully filed and elaborated, however, as to involve no sacrifice of perspicuity or fullness of expression, that he has attained his end. Every quatrain is a pointed expression o a separate thought, like one of Rochefoucault's Maxims; each thought being, by great skill and painstaking in the

* Hallam, Lit. of Europe, II. 227.

packing, made exactly to fit and to fill the same case. It may be doubted, however, whether Davies would not have produced a still better poem if he had chosen a measure which would have allowed him greater freedom and real variety; unless, indeed, his poetical talent was of a sort that required the suggestive aid and guidance of such artificial restraints as he had to cope with in this, and what would have been a bondage to a more fiery and teeming imagination was rather a support to his.

Donne.

The title of the Metaphysical School of poetry, which in one sense of the words might have been given to Davies and his imitators, has been conferred by Dryden upon another race of writers, whose founder was a contemporary of Davies, the famous Dr. John Donne, Dean of St. Paul's. Donne, who died at the age of fifty-eight, in 1631, is said to have written most of his poetry before the end of the sixteenth century, but none of it was published till late in the reign of James. It consists of lyrical pieces (entitled Songs and Sonnets), epithalamions or marriage songs, funeral and other elegies, satires, epistles, and divine poems. On a superficial inspection, Donne's verses look like so many riddles. They seem to be written upon the principle of making the meaning as difficult to be found out as possible —of using all the resources of language, not to express thought, but to conceal it. Nothing is said in a direct, natural manner; conceit follows conceit without intermission; the most remote analogies, the most far-fetched images, the most unexpected turns, one after another, surprise and often puzzle the understanding; while things of the most opposite kinds—the harsh and the harmonious, the graceful and the grotesque, the grave and the gay, the pious and the profane—meet and mingle in the strangest of dances.

But, running through all this bewilderment, a deeper insight detects not only a vein of the most exuberant wit, but often the sunniest and most delicate fancy, and the truest tenderness and depth of feeling. Donne, though in the latter part of his life he became a very serious and devout poet as well as man, began by writing amatory lyrics, the strain of which is anything rather than devout; and in this kind of writing he seems to have formed his poetic style, which, for such compositions, would, to a mind like his, be the most natural and expressive of any. The species of lunacy which quickens and exalts the imagination of a lover, would, in one of so seething a brain as he was, strive to expend itself in all sorts of novel and wayward combinations, just as Shakespeare has made it do in his Romeo and Juliet, whose rich intoxication of spirit he has by nothing else set so livingly before us, as by making them thus exhaust all the eccentricities of language in their struggle to give expression to that inexpressible passion which had taken captive the whole heart and being of both. Donne's later poetry, in addition to the same abundance and originality of thought, often running into a wildness and extravagance not so excusable here as in his erotic verses, is famous for the singular movement of the versification, which has been usually described as the extreme degree of the rugged and tuneless. Pope has given us a translation of his four Satires into modern language, which he calls The Satires of Dr. Donne versified. Their harshness, as contrasted with the music of his lyrics, has also been referred to as proving that the English language, at the time when Donne wrote, had not been brought to a sufficiently advanced state for the writing of heroic verse in perfection.* That this last notion is wholly unfounded, numerous examples sufficiently testify: not to speak of the blank verse of the dramatists, the rhymed heroics of Shakespeare, of Fletcher, of Jonson, of Spenser, and of other writers con-

* See article on Donne in Penny Cyclopædia, vol. IX. p. 85.

temporary with and of earlier date than Donne, are, for the most part, as perfectly smooth and regular as any that have since been written; at all events, whatever irregularity may be detected in them, if they be tested by Pope's narrow gamut, is clearly not to be imputed to any immaturity in the language. These writers evidently preferred and cultivated, deliberately and on principle, a wider compass, and freer and more varied flow, of melody than Pope had a taste or an ear for. Nor can it be questioned, we think, that the peculiar construction of Donne's verse in his satires and many of his other later poems was also adopted by choice and on system. His lines, though they will not suit the see-saw style of reading verse,—to which he probably intended that they should be invincibly impracticable,—are not without a deep and subtle music of their own, in which the cadences respond to the sentiment, when enunciated with a true feeling of all that they convey. They are not smooth or luscious verses, certainly; nor is it contended that the endeavour to raise them to as vigorous and impressive a tone as possible, by depriving them of all over-sweetness or liquidity, has not been carried too far; but we cannot doubt that whatever harshness they have was designedly given to them, and was conceived to infuse into them an essential part of their relish.

Here is one of Donne's Songs:—

Sweetest love, I do not go
For weariness of thee,
Nor in hope the world can show
A fitter love for me;
But, since that I
Must die at last, 'tis best
Thus to use myself in jest
By feigned death to die.

Yesternight the sun went hence,
And yet is here to-day;
He hath no desire nor sense,
Nor half so short a way:
Then fear not me,
But believe that I shall make
Hastier journeys, since I take
More wings and spurs than he.

O how feeble is man's power!
That, if good fortune fall,
Cannot add another hour,
Nor a lost hour recall;
But come bad chance,
And we join to it our strength,
And we teach it art and length
Itself o'er us to advance.

When thou sigh'st thou sigh'st not wind,
But sigh'st my soul away;
When thou weep'st, unkindly kind,
My life's blood doth decay.
It cannot be
That thou lov'st me as thou say'st,
If in thine my life thou waste,
Which art the life of me.

Let not thy divining heart
Forethink me any ill;
Destiny may take thy part
And may thy fears fulfil;
But think that we
Are but laid aside to sleep:
They who one another keep
Alive ne'er parted be.

Somewhat fantastic as this may be thought, it is surely, notwithstanding, full of feeling; and nothing can be more delicate than the execution. Nor is it possible that the writer of such verses can have wanted an ear for melody, however capriciously he may have sometimes experimented upon language, in the effort, as we conceive, to bring a deeper, more expressive music out of it than it would readily yield.

Shakespeare's Minor Poems.

In the long list of the minor names of the Elizabethan poetry appears the bright name of William Shakespeare. Shakespeare published his Venus and Adonis in 1593, and his Tarquin and Lucrece in 1594; his Passionate Pilgrim did not appear till 1599; the Sonnets not till 1609. It is pro-

bable, however, that the first mentioned of these pieces, which, in his dedication of it to the Earl of Southampton, he calls the first heir of his invention, was written some years before its publication; and, although the Tarquin and Lucrece may have been published immediately after it was composed, it, too, may be accounted an early production. But, although this minor poetry of Shakespeare sounds throughout like the utterance of that spirit of highest invention and sweetest song before it had found its proper theme, much is here also, immature as it may be, that is still all Shakespearian — the vivid conception, the inexhaustible fertility and richness of thought and imagery, the glowing passion, the gentleness withal that is ever of the poetry as it was of the man, the enamoured sense of beauty, the living words, the ear-delighting and heart-enthralling music; nay, even the dramatic instinct itself, and the idea at least, if not always the realization, of that sentiment of all subordinating and consummating art of which his dramas are the most wonderful exemplification in literature.

Shakespeare's Dramatic Works.

Shakespeare, born in 1564, is enumerated as one of the proprietors of the Blackfriars Theatre in 1589; is sneered at by Robert Greene in 1592, in terms which seem to imply that he had already acquired a considerable reputation as a dramatist and a writer in blank verse, though the satirist insinuates that he was enabled to make the show he did chiefly by the plunder of his predecessors;* and in 1598 is spoken of by a critic of the day as indisputably the greatest

* "There is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, that, with his tiger's heart wrapt in a player's hide, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you; and, being an absolute *Johannes Factotum*, is, in his own conceit, the only *Shake-scene* in a country."—Greene's Groatsworth of Wit, 1592.

of English dramatists, both for tragedy and comedy, and as having already produced his Two Gentlemen of Verona, Comedy of Errors, Love's Labours Lost, Love's Labours Won (generally supposed to be All's Well that Ends Well),* Midsummer Night's Dream, Merchant of Venice, Richard II., Richard III., Henry IV., King John, Titus Andronicus, and Romeo and Juliet.** ¡There is no ground, however, for feeling assured, and, indeed, it is rather improbable, that we have here a complete catalogue of the plays written by Shakespeare up to this date; nor is the authority of so evidently loose a statement, embodying, it is to be supposed, the mere report of the town, sufficient even to establish absolutely the authenticity of every one of the plays enumerated. It is very possible, for example, that Meres may be mistaken in assigning Titus Andronicus to Shakespeare; and, on the other hand, he may be the author of Pericles, and may have already written that play and some others, although Meres does not mention them. The only other direct or positive information we possess on this subject is, that a History called Titus Andronicus, presumed to be the play afterwards published as Shakespeare's, was entered for publication at Stationers' Hall in 1593; that the Second Part of Henry VI. (if it is by Shakespeare), in its original form of The First Part of the Contention betwixt the Two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster, was published in 1594; the Third Part of Henry VI. (if by Shakespeare), in its original form of The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York, in 1595; his Richard II., Richard III., and Romeo and Juliet, in 1597; Love's Labours Lost and the First Part of Henry IV. in 1598 (the latter, however, having been

* But the Rev. Joseph Hunter, in the Second Part of New Illustrations of the Life, Studies, and Writings of Shakespeare, 8vo. Lond. 1844, and previously in a Disquisition on the Tempest, separately published, has contended that it must be the Tempest; and I have more recently stated some reasons for supposing that it may be the Taming of the Shrew (see The English of Shakespeare, 1857; Prolegomena, pp. 8, 9).

** Palladis Tamia; Wit's Treasury. Being the Second Part of Wit's Commonwealth. By Francis Meres. 1598, p. 282.

entered at Stationers' Hall the preceding year); "a corrected and augmented" edition of Romeo and Juliet in 1599; Titus Andronicus (supposing it to be Shakespeare's), the Second Part of Henry IV., Henry V., in its original form, the Midsummer Night's Dream, Much Ado about Nothing, and the Merchant of Venice, in 1600 (the last having been entered at Stationers' Hall in 1598); the Merry Wives of Windsor, in its original form, in 1602 (but entered at Stationers' Hall the year before*); Hamlet in 1603 (entered likewise the year before); a second edition of Hamlet, "enlarged to almost as much again as it was, according to the true and perfect copy," in 1604; Lear in 1608, and Troilus and Cressida, and Pericles, in 1609 (each being entered the preceding year); Othello not till 1622, six years after the author's death; and all the other plays, namely, the Two Gentlemen of Verona, the Winter's Tale, the Comedy of Errors, King John, All's Well that Ends Well, As You Like It, King Henry VIII., Measure for Measure, Cymbeline, Macbeth, the Taming of the Shrew, Julius Cæsar, Antony and Cleopatra, Coriolanus, Timon of Athens, the Tempest, Twelfth Night, the First Part of Henry VI. (if Shakespeare had anything to do with that play**), and also the perfect editions of Henry V., the Merry Wives of Windsor, and the Second and Third Parts of Henry VI., not, so far as is known, till they appear, along with those formerly printed, in the first folio, in 1623.

Such then is the sum of the treasure that Shakespeare has left us; but the revolution which his genius wrought upon our national drama is placed in the clearest light by comparing his earliest plays with the best which the language

* This first sketch of the Merry Wives of Windsor has been reprinted for the Shakespeare Society, under the care of Mr. Halliwell, 1842.

** See upon this question Mr. Knight's Essay upon the Three Parts of King Henry VI., and King Richard III., in the Seventh Volume of his Library Edition of Shakspere, pp. 1—119. And see also Mr. Halliwell's Introduction to the reprint of The First Sketches of the Second and Third Parts of King Henry the Sixth (the First Part of the Contention and the True Tragedy), edited by him for the Shakespeare Society, 1843.

possessed before his time. He has made all his predecessors obsolete. While his Merchant of Venice, and his Midsummer Night's Dream, and his Romeo and Juliet, and his King John, and his Richard II., and his Henry IV., and his Richard III., all certainly produced, as we have seen, before the year 1598, are still the most universally familiar compositions in our literature, no other dramatic work that had then been written is now popularly read, or familiar to anybody except to a few professed investigators of the antiquities of our poetry. Where are now the best productions even of such writers as Greene, and Peele, and Marlow, and Decker, and Marston, and Webster, and Thomas Heywood, and Middleton? They are to be found among our Select Collections of Old Plays,—publications intended rather for the mere preservation of the pieces contained in them, than for their diffusion among a multitude of readers. Or, if the entire works of a few of these elder dramatists have recently been collected and republished, this has still been done only to meet the demand of a comparatively very small number of curious students, anxious to possess and examine for themselves whatever relics are still recoverable of the old world of our literature. Popularly known and read the works of these writers never again will be: there is no more prospect or probability of this than there is that the plays of Shakespeare will ever lose their popularity among his countrymen. In that sense, everlasting oblivion is their portion, as everlasting life is his. In one form only have they any chance of again attracting some measure of the general attention—namely, in the form of such partial and very limited exhibition as Lamb has given us an example of in his Specimens. And herein we see the first great difference between the plays of Shakespeare and those of his predecessors, and one of the most immediately conspicuous of the improvements which he introduced into dramatic writing. He did not create our regular drama, but he regenerated and wholly transformed it, as if by breathing into it a new soul. We possess no dramatic production

anterior to his appearance that is at once a work of high genius and of anything like equably sustained power throughout. Very brilliant flights of poetry there are in many of the pieces of our earlier dramatists; but the higher they soar in one scene, the lower they generally seem to think it expedient to sink in the next. Their great efforts are made only by fits and starts: for the most part it must be confessed that the best of them are either merely extravagant and absurd, or do nothing but trifle or doze away over their task with the expenditure of hardly any kind of faculty at all. This may have arisen in part from their own want of judgment or want of painstaking, in part from the demands of a very rude condition of the popular taste; but the effect is to invest all that they have bequeathed to us with an air of barbarism, and to tempt us to take their finest displays of successful daring for mere capricious inspirations, resembling the sudden impulses of fury by which the listless and indolent man of the woods will sometimes be roused for the instant from his habitual laziness and passiveness to an exhibition of superhuman strength and activity. From this savage or savage-looking state our drama was first redeemed by Shakespeare. Even Milton has spoken of his "wood-notes wild;" and Thomson, more unceremoniously, has baptized him "wild Shakespeare,"*—as if a sort of half insane irregularity of genius were the quality that chiefly distinguished him from other great writers. If he be a "wild" writer, it is in comparison with some dramatists and poets of succeeding times, who, it must be admitted, are sufficiently tame: compared with the dramatists of his own age and of the age immediately preceding,—with the general throng of the writers from among whom he emerged, and the coruscations of whose feebler and more desultory genius he has made pale,—he is distinguished from them by nothing which is more visible at

* "Is not wild Shakespeare thine and Nature's boast?"—Thomson's Summer.

the first glance than by the superior regularity and elaboration that mark his productions. Marlow, and Greene, and Kyd may be called wild, and wayward, and careless; but the epithets are inapplicable to Shakespeare, by whom, in truth, it was that the rudeness of our early drama was first refined, and a spirit of high art put into it, which gave it order and symmetry as well as elevation. It was the union of the most consummate judgment with the highest creative power that made Shakespeare the miracle that he was,—if, indeed, we ought not rather to say that such an endowment as his of the poetical faculty necessarily implied the clearest and truest discernment as well as the utmost productive energy, —even as the most intense heat must illuminate as well as warm.

But, undoubtedly, his dramas are distinguished from those of his predecessors by much more than merely this superiority in the general principles upon which they are constructed. Such rare passages of exquisite poetry, and scenes of sublimity or true passion, as sometimes brighten the dreary waste of their productions, are equalled or excelled in almost every page of his;—"the highest heaven of invention," to which they ascend only in far distant flights, and where their strength of pinion never sustains them long, is the familiar home of his genius. Other qualities, again, which charm us in his plays are nearly unknown in theirs. He first informed our drama with true wit and humour. Of boisterous, uproarious, blackguard merriment and buffoonery there is no want in our earlier dramatists, nor of mere gibing and jeering and vulgar personal satire; but of true airy wit there is little or none. In the comedies of Shakespeare the wit plays and dazzles like dancing light. This seems to have been the excellence, indeed, for which he was most admired by his contemporaries; for quickness and felicity of repartee they placed him above all other play-writers. But his humour was still more his own than his wit. In that rich but delicate and subtile spirit of drollery, moistening and softening whatever it touches like a

gentle oil, and penetrating through all enfoldings and rigorous encrustments into the kernel of the ludicrous that is in everything, which mainly created Malvolio, and Shallow, and Slender, and Dogberry, and Verges, and Bottom, and Lancelot, and Launce, and Costard, and Touchstone, and a score of other clowns, fools, and simpletons, and which, gloriously over-flowing in Falstaff, makes his wit exhilarate like wine, Shakespeare has had almost as few successors as he had predecessors.

And in these and all his other delineations he has, like every other great poet, or artist, not merely observed and described, but, as we have said, created, or invented. It is often laid down that the drama should be a faithful picture or representation of real life; or, if this doctrine be given up in regard to the tragic or more impassioned drama, because even kings and queens in the actual world never do declaim in the pomp of blank verse, as they do on the stage, still it is insisted that in comedy no character is admissible that is not a transcript,—a little embellished perhaps,—but still substantially a transcript from some genuine flesh and blood original. But Shakespeare has shown that it belongs to such an imagination as his to create in comedy, as well as in tragedy or in poetry of any other kind. Most of the characters that have just been mentioned are as truly the mere creations of the poet's brain as are Ariel, or Caliban, or the Witches in Macbeth. If any modern critic will have it that Shakespeare must have actually seen Malvolio, and Launce, and Touchstone, before he could or at least would have drawn them, we would ask the said critic if he himself has ever seen such characters in real life; and, if he acknowledge, as he needs must, that he never has, we would then put it to him to tell us why the contemporaries of the great dramatist might not have enjoyed them in his plays without ever having seen them elsewhere, just as we do,—or, in other words, why such delineations might not have perfectly fulfilled their dramatic purpose then as well as now, when they certainly do not represent anything that is to be seen

upon earth, any more than do Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. There might have been professional clowns and fools in the age of Shakespeare such as are no longer extant; but at no time did there ever actually exist such fools and clowns as his. These and other similar personages of the Shakespearian drama are as much mere poetical phantasmata as are the creations of the kindred humour of Cervantes. Are they the less amusing or interesting, however, on that account?—do we the less sympathize with them?—nay, do we feel that they are the less naturally drawn? that they have for us less of a truth and life than the most faithful copies from the men and women of the real world?

But in the region of reality, too, there is no other drama so rich as that of Shakespeare. He has exhausted the old world of our actual experience as well as imagined for us new worlds of his own.* What other anatomist of the human heart has searched its hidden core, and laid bare all the strength and weakness of our mysterious nature, as he has done in the gushing tenderness of Juliet, and the "fine frenzy" of the discrowned Lear, and the sublime melancholy of Hamlet, and the wrath of the perplexed and tempest-torn Othello, and the eloquent misanthropy of Timon, and the fixed hate of Shylock? What other poetry has given shape to anything half so terrific as Lady Macbeth, or so winning as Rosalind, or so full of gentlest womanhood as Desdemona? In what other drama do we behold so living a humanity as in his? Who has given us a scene either so crowded with diversities of character, or so stirred with the heat and hurry of actual existence? The men and the manners of all countries and of all ages are there: the lovers and warriors, the priests and prophetesses, of the old heroic and kingly times of Greece,—the Athenians of the days of Pericles and Alcibiades,—the proud patricians and turbulent

* "Each change of many-coloured life he drew,
Exhausted worlds, and then imagined new."—Johnson.

commonalty of the earliest period of republican Rome,—Cæsar, and Brutus, and Cassius, and Antony, and Cleopatra, and the other splendid figures of that later Roman scene,—the kings, and queens, and princes, and courtiers of barbaric Denmark, and Roman Britain, and Britain before the Romans,—those of Scotland before the Norman Conquest, those of England and France at the era of Magna Charta,—all ranks of the people of almost every reign of our subsequent history from the end of the fourteenth to the middle of the sixteenth century,—not to speak of Venice, and Verona, and Mantua, and Padua, and Illyria, and Navarre, and the Forest of Arden, and all the other towns and lands which he has peopled for us with their most real inhabitants.

Nor even in his plays is Shakespeare merely a dramatist. Apart altogether from his dramatic power he is the greatest poet that ever lived. His sympathy is the most universal, his imagination the most plastic, his diction the most expressive, ever given to any writer. His poetry has in itself the power and varied excellences of all other poetry. While in grandeur, and beauty, and passion, and sweetest music, and all the other higher gifts of song, he may be ranked with the greatest,—with Spenser, and Chaucer, and Milton, and Dante, and Homer,—he is at the same time more nervous than Dryden, and more sententious than Pope, and more sparkling and of more abounding conceit, when he chooses, than Donne, or Cowley, or Butler. In whose handling was language ever such a flame of fire as it is in his? His wonderful potency in the use of this instrument would alone set him above all other writers.* Language

* Whatever may be the extent of the vocabulary of the English language, it is certain that the most copious writer has not employed more than a fraction of the entire number of words of which it consists. It has been stated that some inquiries set on foot by the telegraph companies have led to the conclusion that the number of words in ordinary use does not exceed 3000. A rough calculation, founded on Mrs. Clarke's Concordance, gives about 21,000 as the number to be found in the Plays of Shakespeare, without counting inflectional forms as distinct words. Probably the vocabulary of no other of our

has been called the costume of thought: it is such a costume as leaves are to the tree or blossoms to the flower, and grows out of what it adorns. Every great and original writer accordingly has distinguished, and as it were individualised, himself as much by his diction as by even the sentiment which it embodies; and the invention of such a distinguishing style is one of the most unequivocal evidences of genius. But Shakespeare has invented twenty styles. He has a style for every one of his great characters, by which that character is distinguished from every other as much as Pope is distinguished by his style from Dryden, or Milton from Spenser. And yet all the while it is he himself with his own peculiar accent that we hear in every one of them. The style, or manner of expression, that is to say,—and, if the manner of expression, then also the manner of thinking, of which the expression is always the product—is at once both that which belongs to the particular character and that which is equally natural to the poet, the conceiver and creator of the character. This double individuality, or combination of two individualities, is inherent of necessity in all dramatic writing; it is what distinguishes the imaginative here from the literal, the artistic from the real, a scene of a play from a police report. No more in this than in any other kind of literature, properly so called, can we dispense with that infusion of the mind from which the work has proceeded, of something belonging to that mind and to no other, which is the very life or constituent principle of all art, the one thing that makes the difference between a creation and a copy, between the poetical and the mechanical.

great writers is nearly so extensive. Todd's Verbal Index would not give us more than about 7000 for Milton; so that, if we were to add even fifty per cent. to compensate for Milton's inferior voluminousness, the Miltonic vocabulary would still be not more than half as copious as the Shakespearian.

Dramatists contemporary with Shakespeare.

Shakespeare died in 1616. The space of a quarter of a century, or more, over which his career as a writer for the stage extends, is illustrated also by the names of a crowd of other dramatists, many of them of very remarkable genius; but Shakespeare is distinguished from the greater number of his contemporaries nearly as much as he is from his immediate predecessors. With regard to the latter, it has been well observed by a critic of eminent justness and delicacy of taste, that, while they "possessed great power over the passions, had a deep insight into the darkest depths of human nature, and were, moreover, in the highest sense of the word, poets, of that higher power of creation with which Shakespeare was endowed, and by which he was enabled to call up into vivid existence all the various characters of men and all the events of human life, Marlow and his contemporaries had no great share,—so that their best dramas may be said to represent to us only gleams and shadowings of mind, confused and hurried actions, from which we are rather led to guess at the nature of the persons acting before us than instantaneously struck with a perfect knowledge of it; and, even amid their highest efforts, with them the fictions of the drama are felt to be but faint semblances of reality. If we seek for a poetical image, a burst of passion, a beautiful sentiment, a trait of nature, we seek not in vain in the works of our very oldest dramatists. But none of the predecessors of Shakespeare must be thought of along with him, when he appears before us, like Prometheus, moulding the figures of men, and breathing into them the animation and all the passions of life." * "The same," pro-

* Analytical Essays on the Early English Dramatists (understood to be by the late Henry MacKenzie), in Blackwood's Magazine, vol. II. p. 657.

ceeds this writer, "may be said of almost all his illustrious contemporaries. Few of them ever have conceived a consistent character, and given a perfect drawing and colouring of it; they have rarely, indeed, inspired us with such belief in the existence of their personages as we often feel towards those of Shakespeare, and which makes us actually unhappy unless we can fully understand everything about them, so like are they to living men. . . . The plans of their dramas are irregular and confused, their characters often wildly distorted, and an air of imperfection and incompleteness hangs in general over the whole composition; so that the attention is wearied out, the interest flags, and we rather hurry on, than are hurried, to the horrors of the final catastrophe."* In other words, the generality of the dramatic writers who were contemporary with Shakespeare still belong to the semi-barbarous school which subsisted before he began to write.

Beaumont and Fletcher.

Of the dramatic writers of the present period that hold rank the nearest to Shakespeare, the names of Beaumont and Fletcher must be regarded as indicating one poet rather than two, for it is impossible to make anything of the contradictory accounts that have been handed down as to their respective shares in the plays published in their conjoint names, and the plays themselves furnish no evidence that is more decisive. The only ascertained facts relating to this point are the following:—that John Fletcher was about ten years older than his friend Francis Beaumont, the former having been born in 1576, the latter in 1585; that Beaumont, however, so far as is known, came first before the world as a writer of poetry, his translation of the story

* Blackwood's Magazine, vol. II. p. 657.

of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, from the Fourth Book of Ovid's Metamorphoses, having been published in 1602, when he was only in his seventeenth year; that the Masque of the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn (consisting of only a few pages), produced in 1612, was written by Beaumont alone; that the pastoral drama of the Faithful Shepherdess is entirely Fletcher's; that the first published of the pieces which have been ascribed to the two associated together, the comedy of The Woman-Hater, appeared in 1607; that Beaumont died in March, 1616; and that, between that date and the death of Fletcher, in 1625, there were brought out, as appears from the note-book of Sir Henry Herbert, Deputy Master of the Revels, at least eleven of the plays found in the collection of their works, besides two others that were brought out in 1626, and two more that are lost. Deducting the fourteen pieces which thus appear certainly to belong to Fletcher exclusively (except that in one of them, The Maid in the Mill, he is said to have been assisted by Rowley), there still remain thirty-seven or thirty-eight which it is possible they may have written together in the nine or ten years over which their poetical partnership is supposed to have extended.* Eighteen of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays, including the Masque by the former and the Pastoral by the latter, were published separately before 1640; thirty-four more were first published together in a folio volume in 1647; and the whole were reprinted, with the addition of a comedy, supposed to have been lost (The Wild Goose Chase),** making a collection of fifty-three pieces in all, in another folio, in 1679. Beaumont and Fletcher want altogether that *white heat* of passion by which Shakespeare fuses all things into life and poetry at a touch, often making a single brief utterance flash upon us a full though momentary view of a character, which all that follows

* One, the comedy of The Coronation, is also attributed to Shirley.

** This play, one of the best of Fletcher's comedies, for it was not produced till some years after Beaumont's death, had been previously recovered and printed by itself in 1652.

deepens and fixes, and makes the more like to actual seeing with the eyes and hearing with the ears. His was a deeper, higher, in every way more extended and capacious nature than theirs. They want his profound meditative philosophy as much as they do his burning poetry. Neither have they avoided nearly to the same degree that he has done the degradation of their fine gold by the intermixture of baser metal. They have given us all sorts of writing, good, bad, and indifferent, in abundance. Without referring in particular to what we now deem the indecency and licentiousness which pollutes all their plays, but which, strange to say, seems not to have been looked upon in that light by anybody in their own age, simply because it is usually wrapped in very transparent *double entendre*, they might, if judged by nearly one-half of all they have left us, be held to belong to almost the lowest rank of our dramatists instead of to the highest. There is scarcely one of their dramas that does not bear marks of haste and carelessness, or of a blight in some part or other from the playhouse astes or compliances to which they were wont too easily to ive themselves up when the louder applause of the day nd the town made them thoughtless of their truer fame. But fortunately, on the other hand, in scarcely any of their pieces is the deformity thus occasioned more than partial: the circumstances in which they wrote have somewhat debased the produce of their fine genius, but their genius itself suffered nothing from the unworthy uses it was often put to. It springs up again from the dust and mud, as gay a creature of the element as ever, soaring and singing at heaven's gate as if it had never touched the ground. Nothing can go beyond the flow and brilliancy of the dialogue of these writers in their happier scenes; it is the richest stream of real conversation, edged with the fire of poetry. For the drama of Beaumont and Fletcher is as essentially poetical and imaginative, though not in so high a style, as that of Shakespeare; and they, too, even if they were not great dramatists, would still be great poets. Much of their

verse is among the sweetest in the language; and many of the lyrical passages, in particular, with which their plays are interspersed, have a diviner soul of song in them than almost any other compositions of the same class. As dramatists they are far inferior to Shakespeare, not only, as we have said, in striking development and consistent preservation of character,—in other words, in truth and force of conception,—but also both in the originality and the variety of their creations in that department; they have confined themselves to a comparatively small number of broadly distinguished figures, which they delineate in a dashing, scene-painting fashion, bringing out their peculiarities rather by force of situation, and contrast with one another, than by the form and aspect with which each individually looks forth and emerges from the canvas. But all the resources of this inferior style of art they avail themselves of with the boldness of conscious power, and with wonderful skill and effect. Their invention of plot and incident is fertile in the highest degree; and in the conduct of a story for the mere purposes of the stage,—for keeping the attention of an audience awake and their expectation suspended throughout the whole course of the action,—they excel Shakespeare, who, aiming at higher things, and producing his more glowing pictures by fewer strokes, is careless about the mere excitement of curiosity, whereas they are tempted to linger as long as possible over every scene, both for that end, and because their proper method of evolving character and passion is by such delay and repetition of touch upon touch. By reason principally of this difference, the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher, in the great days of the stage, and so long as the state of public manners tolerated their licence and grossness, were much greater favourites than those of Shakespeare in our theatres; two of theirs, Dryden tells us, were acted in his time for one of Shakespeare's; their intrigues,—their lively and florid but not subtle dialogue,—their strongly-marked but somewhat exaggerated representations of character,—their ex-

hibitions of passion, apt to run a little into the melo-dramatic,—were more level to the general apprehension, and were found to be more entertaining, than his higher art and grander poetry. Beaumont and Fletcher, as might be inferred from what has already been said, are, upon the whole, greater in comedy than in tragedy; and they seem themselves to have felt that their genius led them more to the former,—for, of their plays, only ten are tragedies, while their comedies amount to twenty-four or twenty-five, the rest being what were then called tragi-comedies—in many of which, however, it is true, the interest is, in part at least, of a tragic character, although the story ends happily.* But, on the other hand, all their tragedies have also some comic passages; and, in regard to this matter, indeed, their plays may be generally described as consisting, in the words of the prologue to one of them,** of

"Passionate scenes mixed with no vulgar mirth."

Undoubtedly, taking them all in all, they have left us the richest and most magnificent drama we possess after that of Shakespeare; the most instinct and alive both with the true dramatic spirit and with that of general poetic beauty and power; the most brilliantly lighted up with wit and humour; the freshest and most vivid, as well as various, picture of human manners and passions; the truest mirror, and at the same time the finest embellishment, of nature.

* The following definition of what was formerly understood by the term tragi-comedy, or tragic-comedy, is given by Fletcher in the preface to his Faithful Shepherdess;—"A tragic-comedy is not so called in respect of mirth and killing, but in respect it wants deaths (which is enough to make it no tragedy): yet brings some near to it (which is enough to make it no comedy): which [*viz.* tragic-comedy] must be a representation of familiar people, with such kind of trouble as no life can be without; so that a god is as lawful in this as in a tragedy; and mean people as in a comedy.

** The Custom of the Country.

Jonson.

Ben Jonson was born in 1574, or two years before Fletcher, whom he survived twelve years, dying in 1637. He is supposed to have begun to write for the stage so early as 1593; but nothing that he produced attracted any attention till his Comedy of Every Man in his Humour was brought out at the Rose Theatre in 1596. This play, greatly altered and improved, was published in 1598; and between that date and his death Jonson produced above fifty more dramatic pieces in all, of which ten are comedies, three what he called comical satires, only two tragedies, and all the rest masques, pageants, or other court entertainments. His two tragedies of Sejanus and Catiline are admitted on all hands to be nearly worthless: and his fame rests almost entirely upon his first comedy, his three subsequent comedies of Volpone or The Fox, Epicoene or The Silent Woman, and The Alchemist, his court Masques, and a Pastoral, entitled The Sad Shepherd, which was left unfinished at his death. Ben Jonson's comedies admit of no comparison whith those of Shakespeare or of Beaumont and Fletcher: he belongs to another school. His plays are professed attempts to revive, in English, the old classic Roman drama, and aim in their construction at a rigorous adherence to the models afforded by those of Plautus, and Terence, and Seneca. They are admirable for their elaborate art, which is, moreover, informed by a power of strong conception of a decidedly original character; they abound both in wit and eloquence, which in some passages rises to the glow of poetry; the figures of the scene stand out in high relief, every one of them, from the most important to the most insignificant, being finished off at all points with the minutest care; the dialogue carries on the action, and is animated in many parts with the right dramatic reciprocation; and the plot is

in general contrived and evolved with the same learned skill, and the same attention to details, that are shown in all other particulars. But the execution, even where it is most brilliant, is hard and angular; nothing seems to flow naturally and freely; the whole has an air of constraint, and effort, and exaggeration; and the effect that is produced by the most arresting passages is the most undramatic that can be, — namely, a greater sympathy with the performance as a work of art than as anything else. It may be added that Jonson's characters, though vigorously delineated, and though not perhaps absolutely false to nature, are most of them rather of the class of her occasional excrescences or eccentricities than samples of any general humanity; they are the oddities and perversions of a particular age or state of manners, and have no universal truth or interest. What is called the humor of Jonson consists entirely in the exhibition of the more ludicrous kinds of these morbid aberrations; like everything about him, it has force and raciness enough, but will be most relished by those who are most amused by dancing bears and other shows of that class. It seldom or never makes the heart laugh, like the humour of Shakespeare,—which is, indeed, a quality of altogether another essence. As a poet, Jonson is greatest in his masques and other court pageants. The airy elegance of these compositions is a perfect contrast to the stern and rugged strength of his other works; the lyrical parts of them especially have often a grace and sportiveness, a flow as well as a finish, the effect of which is very brilliant. Still, even in these, we want the dewy light and rich coloured irradiation of the poetry of Shakespeare and Fletcher: the lustre is pure and bright, but at the same time cold and sharp, like that of crystal. In Jonson's unfinished pastoral of The Sad Shepherd there is some picturesque description and more very harmonious verse, and the best parts of it (much of it is poor enough) are perhaps in a higher style than anything else he has written; but to compare it, as has sometimes been done, either as a poem or a

a drama, with The Faithful Shepherdess of Fletcher seems to us to evince a deficiency of true feeling for the highest things, equal to what would be shown by preferring, as has also been done by some critics, the humour of Jonson to that of Shakespeare. Fletcher's pastoral, blasted as it is in some parts by fire not from heaven, is still a green and leafy wilderness of poetical beauty; Jonson's, deformed also by some brutality more elaborate than anything of the same sort in Fletcher, is at the best but a trim garden, and, had it been ever so happily finished, would have been nothing more.

Massinger; Ford.

After Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Jonson, the next great name in our drama is that of Philip Massinger, who was born in 1584, and is supposed to have begun to write for the stage soon after 1606, although his first published play, his tragedy of The Virgin Martyr, in which he was assisted by Decker, did not appear till 1622. Of thirty-eight dramatic pieces which he is said to have written, only eighteen have been preserved; eight others were in the collection of Mr. Warburton, which his servant destroyed. Massinger, like Jonson, had received a learned education, and his classic reading has coloured his style and manner; but he had scarcely so much originality of genius as Jonson. He is a very eloquent writer, but has little power of high imagination or pathos, and still less wit or comic power. He could rise, however, to a vivid conception of a character moved by some single aim or passion; and he has drawn some of the darker shades of villany with great force. His Sir Giles Overreach, in A New Way to Pay Old Debts, and his Luke in the City Madam, are perhaps his most successful delineations in this style. In the conduct of his plots, also, he generally displays much skill. In short, all that an be reached by mere talent and warmth of susceptibility

he has achieved; but his province was to appropriate and decorate rather than to create.

John Ford, the author of about a dozen plays that have survived, and one of whose pieces is known to have been acted so early as 1613, has one quality, that of a deep pathos, perhaps more nearly allied to high genius than any Massinger has shown; but the range of the latter in the delineation of action and passion is so much more extensive, that we can hardly refuse to regard him as the greater dramatist. Ford's blank verse is not so imposing as Massinger's: but it has often a delicate beauty, sometimes a warbling wildness and richness, beyond anything in Massinger's fuller swell.

Later Elizabethan Prose Writers.

By the end of the sixteenth century, our prose, as exhibited in its highest examples, if it had lost something in ease and clearness, had gained considerably in copiousness, in sonorousness, and in splendour. In its inferior specimens, also, a corresponding change is to be traced, but of a modified character. In these the ancient simplicity and directness had given place only to a long-winded wordiness, and an awkwardness and intricacy, sometimes so excessive as to be nearly unintelligible, produced by piling clause upon clause, and involution upon involution, in the endeavour to crowd into every sentence as much meaning or as many particulars as possible. Here the change was nearly altogether for the worse; the loss in one direction was compensated by hardly anything that could be called a gain in another. It ought also to be noticed that towards the close of the reign of Elizabeth a singularly artificial mode of composition became fashionable, more especially in sermons and other theological writings, consisting mainly in the remotest or most recondite analogies of thought and the most elaborate verbal in-

genuities or conceits. This may be designated the opposite pole in popular preaching to what we have in the plainness and simplicity, natural sometimes even to buffoonery, of Latimer.

Translation of the Bible.

The authorized translation of the Bible, on the whole so admirable both for correctness and beauty of style, is apt, on the first thought, to be regarded as exhibiting the actual state of the language in the time of James I., when it was first published. It is to be remembered, however, that the new translation was formed, by the special directions of the king, upon the basis of that of Parker's, or the Bishops' Bible, which had been made nearly forty years before, and which had itself been founded upon that of Cranmer, made in the reign of Henry VIII. The consequence is, as Mr. Hallam has remarked, that, whether the style of King James's translation be the perfection of the English language or no, it is not the language of his reign. "It may, in the eyes of many," adds Mr. Hallam, "be a better English, but it is not the English of Daniel, or Raleigh, or Bacon, as any one may easily perceive. It abounds, in fact, especially in the Old Testament, with obsolete phraseology, and with single words long since abandoned, or retained only in provincial use."* This is, perhaps, rather strongly put; for although the preceding version served as a general guide to the translators, and was not needlessly deviated from, they have evidently modernized its style, not perhaps quite up to that of their own day, but so far, we apprehend, as to exclude nearly all words and phrases that had then passed out even of common and familiar use. In that theological age, indeed, few forms of expression found in the Bible could well have fallen

* Lit. of Eur. II. 464.

altogether into desuetude, although some may have come to be less apt and significant than they once were, or than others that might now be substituted for them. But we believe the new translators, in any changes they made, were very careful to avoid the employment of any mere words of yesterday, the glare of whose recent coinage would have contrasted offensively with the general antique colour of diction which they desired to retain. If ever their version were to be revised, whether to improve the rendering of some passages by the lights of modern criticism, or to mend some hardness and intricacy of construction in others, it ought to be retouched in the same spirit of affectionate veneration for the genius and essential characteristics of its beautiful diction; and a good rule to be laid down might be, that no word should be admitted in the improved renderings which was not in use in the age when the translation was originally made. The language was then abundantly rich enough to furnish all the words that could be wanted for the purpose.

Theological Writers:—Bishop Andrews; Donne; Hall; Hooker.

Besides the translation of the Bible, the portion of the English literature of the present period that is theological is very great in point of quantity, and a part of it also possesses distinguished claims to notice in a literary point of view. Religion was the great subject of speculation and controversy in this country throughout the entire space of a century and a half between the Reformation and the Revolution.

One of the most eminent preachers, perhaps the most eminent, of the age of Elizabeth and James, was Dr. Lancelot Andrews, who, after having held the sees of Chichester and Ely, died bishop of Winchester in 1626. Bishop An-

drews was one of the translators of the Bible, and is the author, among other works, of a folio volume of Sermons published, by direction of Charles I., soon after his death; of another folio volume of Tracts and Speeches, which appeared in 1629; of a third volume of Lectures on the Ten Commandments, published in 1642; and of a fourth, containing Lectures delivered at St. Paul's and at St. Giles's, Cripplegate, published in 1657. Both the learning and ability of Andrews are conspicuous in everything he has written; but his eloquence, nevertheless, is to a modern taste grotesque enough. In his more ambitious passages he is the very prince of verbal posture-masters,—if not the first in date, the first in extravagance, of the artificial, quibbling, syllable-tormenting school of our English pulpit rhetoricians; and he undoubtedly contributed more to spread the disease of that manner of writing than any other individual.

Donne, the poet, was also a voluminous writer in prose; having left a folio volume of Sermons, besides a treatise against Popery entitled The Pseudo-Martyr, another singular performance, entitled Biathanatos, in confutation of the common notion about the necessary sinfulness of suicide, and some other professional disquisitions. His biographer, Izaak Walton, says that he preached "as an angel, *from* a cloud, but not in a cloud;" but most modern readers will probably be of opinion that he has not quite made his escape from it. His manner is fully as quaint in his prose as in his verse, and his way of thinking as subtle and peculiar.

Another of the most learned theologians and eloquent preachers of those times was as well as Donne an eminent poet, Bishop Joseph Hall. Hall's English prose works, which are very voluminous, consist of sermons, polemical tracts, paraphrases of Scripture, casuistical divinity, and some pieces on practical religion, of which his Contemplations, his Art of Divine Meditation, and his Enochismus, or Treatise on the Mode of Walking with God, are the most remarkable. The poetic temperament of Hall reveals itself in

his prose as well as in his verse, by the fervour of his piety, and the forcible and often picturesque character of his style.

Last of all may be mentioned, among the great theological writers of this great theological time, one who stands alone, Richard Hooker, the illustrious author of the Eight Books of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity; of which the first four were published in 1594, the fifth in 1597, the three last not till 1632, many years after the author's death. Hooker's style is almost without a rival for its sustained dignity of march; but that which makes it most remarkable is its union of all this learned gravity and correctness with a flow of genuine, racy English, almost as little tinctured with pedantry as the most familiar popular writing. The effect also of its evenness of movement is the very reverse of tameness or languor; the full river of the argument dashes over no precipices, but yet rolls along without pause, and with great force and buoyancy.

Bacon.

Undoubtedly the principal figure in English prose literature, as well as in philosophy, during the first quarter of the seventeenth century, is Francis Bacon. Bacon, born in 1561, published the first edition of his Essays in 1597; his Two Books of the Advancement of Learning in 1605; his Wisdom of the Ancients (in Latin) in 1610; a third edition of his Essays, greatly extended, in 1612; his Two Books of the Novum Organum, or Second Part of the Instauratio Magna, designed to consist of Six Parts (also in Latin), in 1620; his History of the Reign of Henry VII., in 1622; his Nine Books De Augmentis Scientiarum, a Latin translation and extension of his Advancement of Learning, in 1623. He died in 1626. The originality of the Baconian or Inductive method of philosophy, the actual service it has rendered to science,

and even the end which it may be most correctly said to have in view, have all been subjects of dispute almost ever since Bacon's own day; but, notwithstanding all differences of opinion upon these points, the acknowledgment that he was intellectually one of the most colossal of the sons of men has been nearly unanimous. They who have not seen his greatness under one form have discovered it in another; there is a discordance among men's ways of looking at him, or their theories respecting him; but the mighty shadow which he projects athwart the two bygone centuries lies there immovable, and still extending as time extends. The very deductions which are made from his merits in regard to particular points thus only heighten the impression of his general eminence,—of that something about him not fully understood or discerned, which, spite of all curtailment of his claims in regard to one special kind of eminence or another, still leaves the sense of his eminence as strong as ever. As for his Novum Organum, or so-called new instrument of philosophy, it may be that it was not really new when he announced it as such, either as a process followed in the practice of scientific discovery, or as a theory of the right method of discovery. Neither may Bacon have been the first writer, in his own or the immediately preceding age, who recalled attention to the inductive method, or who pointed out the barrenness of what was then called philosophy in the schools. Nor can it be affirmed that it was really he who brought the reign of that philosophy to a close: it was falling fast into disrepute before he assailed it, and would probably have passed away quite as soon as it did although his writings had never appeared. Nor possibly has he either looked at that old philosophy with a very penetrating or comprehensive eye, or even shown a perfect understanding of the inductive method in all its applications and principles. As for his attempts in the actual practice of the inductive method, they were, it must be owned, either insignificant or utter failures; and that, too, while some of his contemporaries, who in no respect acknowledged him

as their teacher, were turning it to account in extorting from nature the most brilliant revelations. But this was not Bacon's proper province. He belongs not to mathematical or natural science, but to literature and to moral science in its most extensive acceptation,—to the realm of imagination, of wit, of eloquence, of æsthetics, of history, of jurisprudence, of political philosophy, of logic, of metaphysics and the investigation of the powers and operations of the human mind. He is either not at all or in no degree worth mentioning an investigator or expounder of mathematics, or of mechanics, or of astronomy, or of chemistry, or of any other branch of geometrical or physical science; but he is a most penetrating and comprehensive investigator, and a most magnificent expounder, of that higher wisdom in comparison with which all these things are but a more intellectual sort of legerdemain. All his works, his essays, his philosophical writings, commonly so called, and what he has done in history, are of one and the same character; reflective and, so to speak, poetical, not simply demonstrative, or elucidatory of mere matters of fact. What, then, is his glory?—in what did his greatness consist? In this, we should say;—that an intellect at once one of the most capacious and one of the most profound ever granted to a mortal—in its powers of vision at the same time one of the most penetrating and one of the most far-reaching—was in him united and reconciled with an almost equal endowment of the imaginative faculty; and that he is, therefore, of all philosophical writers, the one in whom are found together, in the largest proportions, depth of thought and splendour of eloquence. His intellectual ambition, also,—a quality of the imagination,—was of the most towering character; and no other philosophic writer has taken up so grand a theme as that on which he has laid out his strength in his greatest works. But with the progress of scientific discovery that has taken place during the last two hundred years, it would be difficult to show that these works have had almost anything to do. His Advancement of Learning and his Novum Organum have more in

them of the spirit of poetry than of science; and we should almost as soon think of fathering modern physical science upon Paradise Lost as upon them.

Burton.

A remarkable prose work of this age, which ought not to be passed over without notice, is Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy. Robert Burton, who, on his title-page, takes the name of Democritus Junior, died in 1640, and his book was first published in 1621. It is an extraordinary accumulation of out-of-the-way learning, interspersed, somewhat in the manner of Montaigne's Essays, with original matter, but with this among other differences,—that in Montaigne the quotations have the air of being introduced, as we know that in fact they were, to illustrate the original matter, which is the web of the discourse, they but the embroidery; whereas in Burton the learning is rather the web, upon which what he has got to say of his own is worked in by way of forming a sort of decorative figure. Burton is far from having the variety or abundance of Montaigne; but there is considerable point and penetration in his style, and he says many striking things in a sort of half-splenetic, half-jocular humour, which many readers have found wonderfully stimulating. Dr. Johnson declared that Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy was the only book that ever drew him out of bed an hour sooner than he would otherwise have got up.

Historical Writers.

Among the historical writers of the reign of James may be first mentioned the all-accomplished Sir Walter Raleigh.

Raleigh is the author of a few short poems, and of some miscellaneous pieces in prose; but his great work is his History of the World, composed during his imprisonment in the Tower, and first published in a folio volume in 1614. It is an unfinished work, coming down only to the first Macedonian war; and there is no reason to suppose that any more of it was ever written, although it has been asserted that a second volume was burnt by the author. Raleigh's History, as a record of facts, has long been superseded; the interest it possesses at the present day is derived almost entirely from its literary merits, and from a few passages in which the author takes occasion to allude to circumstances that have fallen within his own experience. Much of it is written without any ambition of eloquence; but the style, even where it is most careless, is still lively and exciting, from a tone of the actual world which it preserves, and a certain frankness and heartiness coming from Raleigh's profession and his warm impetuous character. It is not disfigured by any of the petty pedantries to some one or other of which most of the writers of books in that day gave way more or less, and it has altogether comparatively little of the taint of age upon it; while in some passages the composition, without losing anything of its natural grace and heartiness, is wrought up to great rhetorical polish and elevation.

Another celebrated historical work of this time is Richard Knolles's History of the Turks, published in 1610. Johnson, in one of his Ramblers, has awarded to Knolles the first place among English historians; and Mr. Hallam concurs in thinking that his style and power of narration have not been too highly extolled by that critic. "His descriptions," continues Mr. Hallam, "are vivid and animated; circumstantial, but not to feebleness; his characters are drawn with a strong pencil. . . . . In the style of Knolles there is sometimes, as Johnson has hinted, a slight excess of desire to make every phrase effective; but he is exempt from the usual blemishes of his age; and his command of the language is so extensive, that we should not err in placing him among the first of our

elder writers."* Much of this praise, however, is to be considered as given to the uniformity or regularity of Knolles's style; the chief fault of which perhaps is, that it is too continuously elaborated and sustained for a long work. We have already mentioned Samuel Daniel's History of England from the Conquest to the reign of Edward III., which was published in 1618. It is of little historical value, but is remarkable for the same simple ease and purity of language which distinguish Daniel's verse. The contribution to this department of literature of all those that the early part of the seventeenth century produced, which is at the same time the most valuable as an original authority and the most masterly in its execution, is undoubtedly Bacon's History of the reign of Henry VII.

* Lit. of Eur. III. 372.

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